

The Second Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the

CORINTHIANS

INTRODUCTION

1. Title. Textual evidence attests (cf. p. 10) the brief title *Pros Korinthious B*, literally, “To the Corinthians 2.” This is the title that appears in the oldest extant manuscript of the epistle, dating from about the 3d century A.D. The longer title, “The Second Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians,” is not found until much later. For a discussion of this epistle as the “second” one to the Corinthians, and for the use of the word “second” in the title, see below under “3. Historical Setting.” Obviously the title was not a part of the original document.

2. Authorship. External and internal evidence conclusively attest Pauline authorship. The external evidence reaches back to the generation immediately following that of the apostles themselves. Quotations from, and references to, this epistle by many of the early Church Fathers and writers provide abundant testimony to its genuineness and integrity. In his letter to the Corinthians (c. A.D. 95), about 35 years after this epistle, Clement of Rome deals with the same conditions at Corinth as those here considered by Paul (*First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians* 46). The Corinthian church had apparently not changed to any great extent, for many of the old problems still persisted. Writing to the Philippians, Polycarp (d. c. A.D. 155), bishop of Smyrna, quotes 2 Cor. 8:21 (*Epistle* 6). In his treatise *Against Heresies* ii. 30. 7 (c. A.D. 180), Irenaeus, bishop of Lyons, quotes and comments upon Paul’s account of his rapture to the third heaven in 2 Cor. 12:2–4. Clement of Alexandria (c. A.D. 200) quotes from 2 Corinthians not less than 20 times (see *Stromata* i. 1, 11; ii. 19, 20; etc.). Tertullian, of Carthage (c. A.D. 220), the so-called father of Latin theology, quotes frequently from it (*Scorpiace* 13; *Against Marcion* v. 11, 12 *On the Resurrection of the Flesh* 40, 43, 44).

Internal evidence points unmistakably to Paul as the author. Its style is that of Paul. The epistle abounds with references to Paul, to his experiences at Corinth, and to his first epistle to the church there. Many Biblical scholars consider that this epistle gives the clearest and most complete picture of Paul’s nature, personality, and disposition. The historical spontaneity of the experiences recorded in this epistle can be none other than genuine.

3. Historical Setting. Paul made at least three visits, and wrote three, perhaps four, epistles to the church at Corinth. The first visit, about A.D. 51, during the course of his Second Missionary Journey, continued for a year and a half (Acts 18:11). At this time Paul founded and organized the church. He continued to keep in touch with it from time to time through representatives (2 Cor. 12:17). His first written contact with it is mentioned in 1 Cor. 5:9. This document is now presumed lost. Toward the close of more than two years spent at Ephesus, on the third journey, he wrote what is now known as First Corinthians (ch. 16:8; see p. 103).

It is generally accepted that a period of several weeks probably elapsed between the writing of the two Corinthian epistles, the first from Ephesus and the second from Macedonia. Paul had intended to remain in Ephesus until Pentecost, and then to journey to Corinth by way of Macedonia (Acts 19:21). But he left Ephesus sooner than he had intended. This may have been due, in part at least, to the popular uprising that nearly cost

him his life (vs. 24–41). The opposition he experienced while at Ephesus placed a great strain upon him. He referred to the opponents of truth as “beasts” (1 Cor. 15:32), and observed that he had been “pressed out of measure, above strength” and had “despaired even of life” (2 Cor. 1:8). It was in this condition that Paul left Ephesus for Macedonia.

He journeyed to Troas, the port of embarkation for Macedonia. Here he expected the return of Titus with a report of the response of the Corinthians to his previous epistle. But Titus did not arrive within the time expected, and Paul, finding no rest of spirit because of anxiety for the church at Corinth (ch. 2:13), was unable to take advantage of the open door to the preaching of the gospel at Troas. Pressing on into Macedonia, he met Titus at Philippi. With relief and joy Paul listened to the good news Titus brought from Corinth.

Some think that Paul had returned to Corinth for a second visit. He speaks of a previous visit that had been distressing and disappointing (see on chs. 2:1; 12:14; 13:1, 2). Probably following such a visit and the receipt of further disconcerting news from Corinth (1 Cor. 1:11), he dispatched a letter of reprimand and counsel (1 Corinthians), and sent Titus to prepare the way for a further visit he planned to make (2 Cor. 8:6; 13:1, 2; cf. AA 301).

In ch. 2:4 Paul refers to a former letter he had written to Corinth “out of much affliction and anguish of heart,” and which had made them “sorry” (ch. 7:8). Many scholars think that in these and others passages Paul can hardly refer to 1 Corinthians, since—as they affirm—these statements do not properly describe the spirit and nature of that epistle. Accordingly, they argue that he must have written a letter between the two that appear in the NT. Some who hold this view consider that this letter has been lost, but others think that it is preserved as chs. 10–13 of 2 Corinthians. Plausible reasons can be presented both for and against this theory, but objective proof is lacking for either. This commentary therefore assumes that 1 Corinthians is the letter to which Paul refers in 2 Corinthians (cf. AA 324). From chs. 2:13; 7:5; 8:1; 9:2, 4, it appears that Paul wrote this second epistle while in Macedonia. The date was about A.D. 57 (see pp. 102–104).

Temporarily, at least, Paul’s letters and visits seem to have accomplished their purpose. It is evident from Rom. 16:23 that Paul was hospitably received and entertained by one of the chief members of the church. The change in the church at Corinth is further corroborated by the fact that in the epistles to the Galatians and to the Romans, which were written during the course of his stay at Corinth, he gives evidence of having recovered from the state of restless anxiety and solicitude for the Corinthian church that distressed his ardent soul at Troas (2 Cor. 2:13; cf. ch. 7:6, 13, 14). Also, the collection in Corinth for the saints at Jerusalem came to a successful conclusion (Rom. 15:26).

After the writing of this second epistle and his next visit, we find only scattered references to the Corinthian church. However, an epistle to the Corinthians by Clement of Rome about A.D. 95 reveals that at least some of the old evils had reappeared. Clement does compliment the church for its exemplary conduct in many ways, but he also rebukes it for its strife and party spirit. This is the last information we have concerning the church at Corinth during the apostolic age.

4. Theme. The immediate occasion for the epistle was the encouraging report Titus had brought from Corinth. The first part of the letter deals with the reception the Corinthians had given Paul’s former epistle, and reviews some of the problems dealt with in it. Following Paul’s instructions the church had disfellowshipped the immoral offender

of 1 Corinthians (1 Cor. 5:1–5; cf. 2 Cor. 2:6). Paul now advises how to win back the offender.

The contributions gathered among the churches of Macedonia and Greece for the poor are given special emphasis. This project lay close to Paul's heart, for it would bind the hearts of Jewish and Gentile Christians together in a bond of fellowship and unity. On their part, the Gentile believers would be led to appreciate the sacrifices of Jewish Christians in bringing them a knowledge of the gospel. In turn, the Jews would be led to appreciate the spirit of fellowship to which the gifts bore mute, yet eloquent witness. But the church at Corinth had been delinquent in collecting their contribution, and far behind the churches of Macedonia, probably as a result of the strife and vice that had absorbed its attention. In this letter Paul makes a final appeal for promptness and diligence.

It seems that a majority of the Corinthian church members heartily accepted the counsel given by Paul and his collaborators. They had received Titus with open arms. Almost from the first there had been factions in the church, some favoring one leader and some another. Much of the trouble occasioned by this division of loyalty had been allayed, but open and malignant opposition, probably by a Judaizing faction similar to the one in Galatia, persisted. Its objective was to undermine Paul's work, authority, and apostleship. Opponents charged Paul with fickleness for not coming to Corinth as he had originally promised. They argued that he lacked apostolic authority. They branded him a coward for attempting to control the church at a distance, by letter. This proved, they said, that he was afraid to appear in person.

The first nine chapters of 2 Corinthians are characterized by gratitude and appreciation; the last four, by marked severity and self-defense. It has been suggested that the former chapters were addressed to the majority, who had accepted Paul's counsel and reproof, and the latter to a minority who persisted in opposing his efforts to restore the church to a spirit of harmony. At length, and in various ways, Paul essays to prove his authority and vindicate his conduct among them. For proof of his apostleship he appeals to his visions and revelations from the Lord, to his unparalleled sufferings for the Lord Jesus, and to the seal of divine approval evident in the fruitfulness of his labors. The severity of Paul's words, addressed to the Corinthian church concerning certain false apostles and possibly a minority of its members still under their influence, is without parallel in his epistles to other churches.

This epistle differs materially from 1 Corinthians. The first epistle is objective and practical; the second, largely subjective and personal. The first is more calm and measured in tone; the second reflects Paul's anxiety for news from Corinth, his relief and joy when Titus finally arrived, and his firm purpose to deal effectively with those who still troubled the church. The first reflects conditions in the Corinthian church; the second, the passion of the apostle himself for the church. Although the main concern of this second epistle is not doctrinal, as with Galatians and Romans, it does set forth important doctrinal truths.

5. Outline.

- I. Introduction, 1:1–11.
 - A. Salutation, 1:1, 2.
 - B. Thanksgiving in the midst of tribulation, 1:3–11.
- II. Recent Relations With the Church at Corinth, 1:12 to 7:16.
 - A. An explanation of the change in travel plans, 1:12 to 2:4.

- B. Counsel for restoring the immoral offender to Christ, 2:5–11.
- C. Anxiety to have, and joy upon receiving, news from Corinth, 2:12–17.
- D. Apostolic credentials, 3:1–18.
 - 1. Paul's credentials as a genuine apostle, 3:1–6.
 - 2. The glory of the apostolic commission, 3:7–18.
- E. The apostles sustained by divine power in their ministry, 4:1 to 5:10.
 - 1. Strength to endure: an evidence of divine grace, 4:1–18.
 - 2. Life and death in view of eternity, 5:1–10.
- F. The ministry of reconciliation, 5:11 to 6:10.
 - 1. The apostle as an ambassador for Christ, 5:11–21.
 - 2. The discipline essential to apostleship, 6:1–10.
- G. An appeal to the Corinthians to separate from evildoers, 6:11 to 7:1.
- H. Paul's rejoicing at the warm response of the Corinthians, 7:2–16.
- III. The Collection for Needy Christians in Judea, 8:1 to 9:15.
 - A. The exemplary liberality of the Macedonian churches, 8:1–6.
 - B. The example of Jesus Christ, 8:7–15.
 - C. The commission and commendation of Titus to receive the offering at Corinth, 8:16–24.
 - D. An appeal to the Corinthians to do their part, 9:1–15.
 - 1. An appeal to complete the collection of funds, 9:1–5.
 - 2. An appeal to liberality, 9:6–15.
- IV. Paul's Defense of His Apostleship; An Appeal to the Unrepentant, 10:1 to 13:10.
 - A. A reply to those who have belittled Paul as an apostle, 10:1–12.
 - B. Corinth within his appointed sphere of labor, 10:13–18.
 - C. Marks of difference between true and false apostles, 11:1 to 12:18.
 - 1. The subtlety of false apostles, 11:1–6.
 - 2. Paul not dependent upon the Corinthians for support, 11:7–15.
 - 3. His encounter with peril and privation, 11:16–33.
 - 4. Paul the recipient of divine revelations, 12:1–5.
 - 5. Paul humbled by "a thorn in the flesh," 12:6–10.
 - 6. Paul not enriched at their expense, 12:11–18.
 - D. A final appeal to the unrepentant, 12:19 to 13:10.
- V. Conclusion, 13:11–14.

CHAPTER 1

3 *The apostle encourageth them against troubles, by the comforts and deliverances which God had given him, as in all his afflictions, 8 so particularly in his late danger in Asia. 12 And calling both his own conscience and their's to witness of his sincere manner of preaching the immutable truth of the gospel, 15 he excuseth his not coming to them, as proceeding not of lightness, but of his lenity towards them.*

1. Apostle. Gr. *apostolos* (see on Mark 3:14; Acts 1:2). Paul had received his commission directly from Jesus Christ (Acts 26:16, 17; cf. Gal. 1:11, 12). He was thus an ambassador representing Christ (2 Cor. 5:20). In most of his epistles Paul identifies himself as an apostle, his authority thus being equal with that of the Twelve, all of whom had seen the Lord and been instructed personally by Him (see on 1 Cor. 9:1).

Of Jesus Christ. That is, sent by Jesus Christ, and therefore speaking for Him.

Will of God. The false apostles now troubling the Corinthian church came on their own initiative. Paul had become an apostle by an act of the divine will (cf. Rom. 1:1; 1

Cor. 1:1). It is imperative that the Corinthians recognize this difference and accept Paul for what he is—God’s own representative.

For several decades there was an influential party of Jewish Christians who demanded that Gentile converts to Christianity also become proselytes to Judaism and observe the requirements of the ritual law. These Jews apparently denied the validity of the decision by the council at Jerusalem to the effect that Gentile converts need not do so (Acts 15:19, 20, 28, 29). At one time this Judaizing party successfully turned the churches of Galatia against Paul (Gal. 3:1; 5:1–7), and the churches of the province of Asia as well (2 Tim. 1:15). These Judaizers persistently belittled Paul, and since he had not been personally associated with Christ, like the Twelve, they represented him as at best a second-rate apostle. The tendency in the early church was to divide apostles into two groups—those who had been with Christ and those who had not. Those who had been Jesus in the flesh were commonly held in higher esteem than those who had not. The latter group had been appointed to apostleship by the church, and were considered inferior to the first group. This classification was purely human, and had not the approval of either God or the original apostles. Hence Paul often found it necessary to stress that he had been called personally by Christ. He had met Jesus face to face on the road to Damascus. He had been instructed by the Lord Jesus Christ in person (Gal. 1:11, 12). He had also been commissioned by Jesus in person, in the Temple on his first visit to Jerusalem after his conversion (Acts 22:21). Because the opposition party in Corinth had challenged his credentials as an apostle, Paul, in his second epistle to that church, asserted boldly the fact of his divine appointment to apostleship (see 2 Cor. 3:1–6; 10:1–12; 11:1 to 12:18). If it was “the will of God” that Paul should be an apostle, what right did the Judaizers have to challenge his authority? See on 2 Cor. 3:1; 11:5; Gal. 1:1; 2:6.

Timothy our brother. Timothy is nowhere called an apostle. He was yet a young man, though he had been associated with Paul for nearly 15 years (see on Acts 16:1–3; cf. AA 184). Paul also refers to Timothy as his “workfellow” (Rom. 16:21). Perhaps he was still considered an apprentice. He was already well known to the Corinthian church (1 Cor. 16:10; 2 Cor. 1:19). The names of Paul and Timothy are united in the salutations of five other epistles (Phil. 1:1; Col. 1:1; 1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:1; Philemon 1:1). Paul calls him his “own son in the faith” (1 Tim. 1:2; cf. 2 Tim. 1:2). See on 1 Cor. 4:17; 16:10.

Church. Gr. *ekklēsia* (see on Matt. 18:17). Paul calls the church at Corinth “the church of God,” meaning that it had been established by the will of God, even as Paul had been ordained an apostle “by the will of God.” The city of Corinth was notable for its learning, its wealth, and its wickedness (see p. 656). Yet in this, one of the most evil places in the Roman world, God had established His church.

All the saints. There was apparently by this time a considerable body of believers in Achaia (see The Journeys of Paul). The church at Cenchreae is specifically mentioned (Rom. 16:1). Doubtless there were others. The term *hagioi*, “saints” (see on Rom. 1:7), was used from the beginning to designate Christian believers (see Acts 9:13) as ones separated from the world unto God. God’s people are called “believers” (1 Tim. 4:12), because of their faith in Christ; “disciples” (Acts 11:26), because they learn of Him; “servants” (Eph. 6:6), because they do His bidding; “children” (1 John 3:10; cf. v. 1), because they are adopted into the family of God; and “saints,” because they are adopted

into the family God; and “saints,” because their lives are dedicated exclusively to Him (1 Cor. 1:2).

Achaia. The Romans divided Greece into two senatorial provinces, Achaia and Macedonia (cf. Acts 19:21). Corinth was the capital of Achaia, which included Attica and the Peloponnesus, and the residence of the Roman proconsul, or governor (see The Journeys of Paul). The inclusion in the salutation of “all the saints which are in all Achaia,” in addition to those at Corinth, implies that, to some degree, they also were in need of the counsel sent to the church at Corinth. The Corinthians were to convey the apostle’s greeting and message to the other churches.

2. Grace ... and peace. See on Rom. 1:7. This is Paul’s greeting in all but the pastoral epistles, where he adds the word “mercy.” Grace (*charis*; see on John 1:14) was a common salutation among the Greeks. It expressed the wish that the person to whom it was addressed might experience joy and prosperity. As a Christian greeting, “grace” expressed the desire that the one to whom it was spoken might know the fullness of divine power and blessing. In Christian usage common Greek words often took on new shades of meaning (see Vol. V, p. 106). “Peace,” the favorite greeting of the Jews, wished the one addressed every material and spiritual blessing (see on Isa. 26:3; Matt. 5:9; Luke 1:79; 2:14; John 14:27). Perhaps by the salutation “grace ... and peace” Paul thought to express his desire for fellowship with Christians of both Jewish and Gentile origin. The Christian church unites both Jew and Greek.

God’s “grace” justifies repentant sinners (Rom. 3:24; cf. Titus 2:11); His “peace” keeps their hearts and minds steadfast in Christ (Phil. 4:7).

Our Father. See on Matt. 6:9.

Lord Jesus Christ. See on Matt. 1:1; John 1:38.

3. Blessed be God. Gr. *eulogētos* (see on Matt. 5:3). Appropriately, Paul begins with an ascription of praise to God. For the sense in which men “bless” God see on Ps. 63:4.

The Father. The significance Christ attached to the name Father as applied to God is seen throughout the teachings and ministry of Jesus. It reflects the spirit of the Sermon on the Mount. It is the key word of the Lord’s Prayer. It is the ground of Christian brotherhood, the inducement to forgive those who offend us. The all-pervading consciousness of God as His Father was with Jesus throughout life (see on Luke 2:49). After His resurrection He spoke of “my Father and your Father” (John 20:17). Men sometimes experience difficulty comprehending the omnipresence, the omnipotence, and the omniscience of the Infinite God. But all men can understand and appreciate Him as the loving Father, who gave His only Son to live and die for a race of sinners (John 3:16). To see Jesus is to see and know the Father (John 14:9; cf. ch. 17:3).

Father of mercies. This exact phrase occurs only here in the NT. God is the merciful Father, the source from which mercies flow, the originator of all mercies. Mercy implies something more than mere benevolence, more than goodness. God is good to all, but He is merciful to those afflicted by sin and in need of forgiveness. Mercies are a revelation of the very character of God. They are the issues of His heart. See on Rom. 12:1.

Comfort. Gr. *paraklēsis* (see on Matt. 5:4). It is through the Holy Spirit, the Comforter (see on John 14:16), that God comes close to man to minister to his spiritual and material needs. The word *paraklēsis* is characteristic of this epistle. It occurs 11 times as a noun and 18 times in the verb form.

4. Comforteth. Gr. *parakaleō* (see on Matt. 5:4). That is, through the agency of the Holy Spirit (see on 2 Cor. 1:3). The Greek implies that this “comfort” is continued without interruption.

Tribulation. Gr. *thlipsis*, “oppression,” “pressure,” “affliction,” “distress,” “straits.” The “comfort” that came from God enabled the apostle to take the attitude of calm serenity in the face of distress which is reflected in chs. 4:8–11; 11:30.

To comfort. Those who have experienced tribulation and sorrow themselves and found the “comfort” that comes from above are able to sympathize with others in similar circumstances, and point them to their heavenly Father.

The comfort. More is included in this term than mere consolation in sorrow or in trouble. It includes all that a loving heavenly Father can do for His earthborn children. See on Matt. 5:4. To the Christian, tribulation plays an important role in the perfection of character (cf. Heb. 2:10). By themselves, suffering and tribulation have no power to make men Christ-like. In fact, they make many men morose and bitter. But God sanctifies tribulation, and those who find in Him grace and strength to endure have solved one of the great problems of life (cf. Heb. 2:10). Compare the experience and example of Paul himself (see on 2 Cor. 4:8–11; cf. ch. 12:7–10). It is much more difficult to believe in God in the midst of luxury, worldly comfort, and ease. In the providence of God, tribulation and sorrow can lead us closer to Him. Should men not therefore praise Him for tribulation and let it be a steppingstone to the kingdom of God (Acts 14:22; Rom. 5:3; cf. James 1:2, 3)?

5. The sufferings of Christ. The expression may mean either sufferings endured for Christ’s sake or the sufferings of Christ Himself that are shared by His followers. The Greek construction, “of Christ,” permits the second meaning, which raises the question: In what sense are the sufferings of Christ to abound in us? Christ asked His disciples, “Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of?” (Matt. 20:22). Peter speaks of being “partakers of Christ’s sufferings” (1 Peter 4:13). It is the Christian’s privilege to know “the fellowship of his sufferings” (Phil. 3:10), “always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus” (2 Cor. 4:10). According to the first interpretation, “the sufferings of Christ” are those endured for His sake. As Christ’s sufferings were occasioned by opposition, contempt, persecution, trial, and want, so are those of His disciples.

The value of suffering depends, however, not so much upon the circumstances that occasion it, as upon the attitude of the sufferer toward it (cf. 1 Cor. 13:3, RSV). Willingness to suffer is not of itself an evidence of Christianity. Countless thousands who have uncomplainingly experienced trials and sufferings were not children of God. It is fellowship with Christ that ennobles and sanctifies suffering (see 1 Peter 2:20, 21).

Consolation. Gr. *paraklēsis* (see on v. 3).

Aboundeth. See on Eph. 3:20. In all his earthly distresses Paul was fully satisfied with the “comfort” provided from Heaven.

6. Be afflicted. Paul’s afflictions, together with the divine comfort that came to him in his affliction, were all on behalf of those who were won by him to Christ. More than that, such afflictions provided an opportunity for patient endurance, which new converts might emulate. Also, Paul’s afflictions qualified him to give consolation and counsel to others who might go through similar experiences.

Which is effectual. Important textual evidence may be cited (cf. p. 10) for reading this long middle clause of the sentence at the close of the verse, thus applying it to the comfort Paul experienced as well as to his afflictions. The afflictions and consolations experienced by church leaders often prove to be of great value to the people they serve. The courageous, patient example of the former encourages the latter (see Phil. 1:13, 14). The patient endurance of affliction ever tends to promote salvation and sanctification (Rom. 5:3–5; 8:28).

Comforted. Gr. *parakaleō* (see on Matt. 5:4; cf. 2 Cor. 1:3, 4).

7. Our hope of you. That is, for you, or concerning you. Paul's confidence concerning them was based on his own experience. As he had obtained comfort from God in times of trial, he knows that others can also under similar circumstances. Such is the privilege of all who share the fellowship of Christ's sufferings.

As ye are partakers. In vs. 4–6 Paul has referred to his own experience. The comfort of which he speaks can be realized only by experiencing affliction. Evidently the Corinthians had been subjected to trials similar, in some respects, to those Paul had endured. Such trials were common to the early churches, and served to unite all true believers in a fellowship of suffering—and consolation. Christians expected to endure persecution for Christ's sake (cf. John 16:33).

Christian steadfastness is no merely emotional state into which men work themselves. It is the product of divine love and grace operating in the lives of consecrated men and women. It is a hope based upon past evidences of God's saving power and "comfort" in times of trial. The experience of relying on God at such times provides a firm foundation for steadfastness on later occasions (cf. 1 Peter 5:10).

8. Our trouble. From a statement of general principles on tribulation (vs. 3–7), Paul now turns to the specific trial through which he has recently passed in Asia. Scholars have suggested various experiences that Paul may have had in mind:

- a. The tumult raised by Demetrius at Ephesus (Acts 19:22–41). It has been objected, however, that Paul could hardly have despaired of life during this tumult, since it was his friends who persuaded him not to appear in public at the theater, fearful that he would be torn to pieces. Furthermore, Paul had often been in danger of death, as at Lystra, where he was stoned and left for dead (Acts 14:19, 20), so that the experience at Ephesus would hardly seem to account for the extreme anguish expressed here. The incident at Lystra has been regarded by some as that to which Paul here refers.
- b. Some deadly sickness. This proposal hardly seems warranted by the context.
- c. The plot of the Jews to kill Paul as he left Corinth, and as a result of which he found it necessary to change his plans (Acts 20:3; cf. 1 Cor. 16:9).
- d. The agony of mind and soul Paul suffered over the condition of the Corinthian church, particularly since his second visit, which had so distressed him (see p. 822), and his anxiety over the reception of his previous letter. It is pointed out that Paul reserves his strongest expressions for mental anguish rather than physical danger and suffering. Attention has also been called to the relief that came to Paul with the news of a change in affairs at Corinth (2 Cor. 7:6, 7, 13). Although the expression "despaired even of life" may seem strong for mental anguish, those who have experienced it will testify that circumstances may give rise to such stress of soul that it seems impossible to go on living unless a remedy is found. All things considered, this suggestion seems more probable than the others (cf. AA 323–325).

Pressed out of measure. It is not the suffering itself, but its intensity, that Paul stresses. His purpose is twofold: (1) to express his personal interest in, and concern for, the believers at Corinth, and (2) to encourage them to be steadfast.

Despaired even of life. See above on “our trouble.”

9. Sentence. Literally, “answer.” Paul thought God willed for him soon to lay down his life. They had the “answer” of death in themselves; that is, the inward answer they gave to the question of their fate was that they would die. The tense of the Greek verb implies that the vivid recollection of the death experience made it still seem real as he wrote.

Not trust in ourselves. The experience through which Paul had recently passed had impressed this lesson upon him. The same truth was evident to him as he prayed for the removal of his “thorn in the flesh” (ch. 12:7–10). Paul learned to rely on the “comfort” he had found in God (see on ch. 1:4).

All men have a strong tendency to trust in themselves, a tendency that is most difficult to overcome. It took “the sentence of death” and “a thorn in the flesh” before Paul overcame it. Israel’s experiences on the way from Egypt to Canaan were designed to teach Israel this fundamental lesson. God often permits His people to experience dire straits in order that they may come to realize their own insufficiency and be induced to trust and hope in His sufficiency.

Trials are requisite to Christian experience (Acts 14:22). It is fundamental to man’s salvation that he learn to rely wholly upon Christ. Confidence in God is an essential factor in day-by-day Christian living. It is often in the fiery furnace that men learn to walk side by side with the Son of God (see Dan. 3:25). Only those who “hunger and thirst” for the things of God may expect to be “filled” (see on Matt. 5:6). A sense of need is ever prerequisite to receiving the gifts of Heaven (see Vol. V, p. 209; see on Mark 1:44; Luke 7:41).

Raiseth the dead. For Paul’s comment on the certainty of the resurrection see 1 Cor. 15:12–23, 51–55; 1 Thess. 4:16, 17.

10. So great a death. Or, “so terrible a death.” The word “deliver,” here used three times, is the keynote of this verse. Deliverance had come to have real meaning to Paul (see ch. 11:23–28), and this accounts for his emphasis on it.

He will yet deliver. Perhaps the peril to which Paul alludes in v. 8 was not yet altogether abated. Perhaps Paul realized that in the gospel ministry one peril would certainly be followed by another. Past deliverance gave “trust” and confidence to expect future deliverance. The Christian’s sense of security grows out of confidence in the promises of God and personal experiences in which those promises have been realized.

11. Helping together. Through prayer the Corinthian believers could be co-laborers with Paul in his ministry. He firmly believed in the value of intercessory prayer—his own (Rom. 1:9; Eph. 1:16; Phil. 1:4; etc.) and that of others (Rom. 15:30; 1 Thess. 5:25; 2 Thess. 3:1). Paul highly esteemed the united prayers of God’s people.

The gift bestowed. That is, the blessing that had been granted in answer to united prayers. Paul doubtless refers to his deliverance from mortal peril (v. 8).

Many persons. Literally, “many faces,” a picturesque idiom meaning “persons.” Perhaps Paul thinks of the many persons whose faces had been lifted to God on his behalf. The spirit of prayer and thankfulness is mirrored in the face. Looking back upon the afflictions and trials through which he has passed, he realizes that a divine hand has

delivered him from death, but sees also a sea of upturned faces interceding for him at the throne of grace.

Paul invites members of the household of faith to unite in prayer for those God has appointed to minister to their spiritual needs. The position of these leaders is often most perilous. Their responsibilities are great and their problems many. Their spiritual and physical preservation is a matter of major concern to the church. It is equally important that ministers sense the loving fellowship of their flock. This is what led Paul to express his yearning for the prayers of those among whom he labored. Great strength results from sympathy and prayerful support. Paul had not been alone in prayer for divine help; now he could not rejoice alone. He longed for others to share the blessings that had come to him.

12. Our conscience. Paul now begins his discussion of recent relations between himself and the church at Corinth. He had claimed the right to their intercessory prayers (v. 11), and now declares he has not forfeited that claim by his past or present conduct. His conscience fully acquits him. Incidentally, Paul makes repeated reference to the testimony of his conscience (see Acts 23:1; 24:16; Rom. 9:1). Some of the Corinthians had charged him with questionable and insincere intentions with respect to his change of plans regarding his announced visit to Corinth (see 2 Cor. 1:15). But his conscience was void of offense before God, before the Gentiles, and in particular before the Corinthians.

In simplicity. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the reading “in holiness.” Paul’s attitude was the result of unreserved surrender to the will of God.

Fleshy wisdom. See on Rom. 7:24; 2 Cor. 10:2; cf. on 1 Cor. 9:27. Paul lives and labors in a wholly spiritual atmosphere, uninfluenced by considerations that motivate men of the world. “Fleshy wisdom” is the wisdom of the unregenerate man, who is not under the influence of the Spirit of God. Human wisdom may appear profound, but it often deceives.

Have ... conversation. Gr. *anastrephō*, literally, “to turn again,” that is, to turn hither and thither, and thus “to conduct [oneself],” “to live.” Various translations, *anastrephō* appears in this sense in Eph. 2:3; 1 Tim. 3:15; Heb. 13:18; 1 Peter 1:17; 2 Peter 2:18. The noun form, *anastrophē*, means “manner of life,” “behavior,” “conduct” (see Gal. 1:13; Eph. 4:22; James 3:13; 2 Peter 3:11; etc.). In Old English the word “conversation” meant “conduct,” “way of life.” In modern usage “conversation” has come to denote talk that *turns* from one person to another.

Nothing keeps a man steady under manifold sufferings like a clear conscience. Suffering is greatly intensified by a conscience that keeps telling a man he has brought the trouble on himself. He is reaping only what he has sown. See 1 Peter 2:12, 19, 20. It was a “good conscience” that sustained Paul throughout his trial, first in Jerusalem (Acts 23:1) and later at Caesarea (ch. 24:16). The height of moral stature is achieved only when “the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God” (Rom. 8:16). The certain conviction of one’s clear acceptance with God and his standing in his sight is the only permanent basis for lasting joy.

To you-ward. Paul had given the Corinthians ample opportunity to observe the grace of God at work in his own life.

13. We write. Paul has just spoken of his sincerity and purity of intentions. This, he says, can be found in his letters, the present one and the two previous of which we know (see p. 822).

Read ... acknowledge. Gr. *anaginōskō* ... *epiginōskō*, a play on words. *Anaginōskō* denotes the silent or oral reading of words, and *epiginōskō*, an understanding of what is read. There is no hidden meaning in his words, no ambiguity that permits Paul to think one thing while he writes another. The Corinthians had apparently charged him with duplicity, with saying one thing but meaning another. Paul declares that all he has written them has no other meaning than the words appear to have. The report brought by Titus indicated that many of the Corinthian believers had understood Paul correctly. They were not misconstruing his motives. He hoped they would never have occasion to think otherwise.

14. Acknowledged. That is, understood (see on v. 13). Although some of the Corinthians understood Paul, others did not.

In part. This may apply either to Paul or to the Corinthians. He either means that all of them have a partial understanding of him or that only part of them understand him at all.

We are your rejoicing. Some at Corinth felt a sacred pride in Paul and his associate workers. It bodes well for the church when ministry and laity have mutual confidence and mutual cause for rejoicing.

Ye also. In the last day Paul's converts will be his "crown of rejoicing" (see 1 Thess. 2:19, 20; Phil. 2:16; cf. Heb. 12:2). The joy of ministers and the laity will be complete in that day when Christ shall appear to gather His redeemed into His kingdom. If all were to keep that day in mind, resentment, hostility, and misunderstanding would never occur. How much Christian love and good will would be manifested if all looked forward to that day of mutual joy in the presence of God.

15. In this confidence. That is, their confidence in Paul's integrity and sincerity (see vs. 12–14).

I was minded. At first Paul had intended to go directly from Ephesus to Corinth, by sea, and then to Macedonia, back to Corinth, and on to Jerusalem. Thus he had purposed to honor them with two visits (see below under "second" and "benefit") on the same journey, while the Macedonians were to have but one. It meant going out of his way to spend this extra time with the Corinthian church. He had abandoned the double visit to Corinth, for the reason given in v. 23.

Before. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) placing this word with the verb "was minded" rather than with the infinitive "to come." However, the sense seems to require, and commentators generally agree, that its position should be as in the KJV. Thus understood, Paul means that he had purposed to visit Corinth "before" going on to Macedonia.

Second. It is not altogether clear whether Paul is thinking of his original visit to Corinth as the first "benefit" and this proposed double visit as the second, or whether he is thinking of the now canceled itinerary, with its first and second visits.

Benefit. Gr. *charis*, "grace," or "favor." Textual evidence may be cited (cf. p. 10) for reading *chara*, "joy," or "pleasure." Paul had informed the Corinthians of his change of plans (1 Cor. 16:5, 6), and his opponents at Corinth took advantage of the change to

charge him with vacillation and flippancy (2 Cor. 1:17). They seized upon this flimsy pretext because of their own ill will toward him and their desire to discredit him.

16. Brought on ... way. Gr. *propempō*, “to send forward,” “to accompany,” “to escort.” *Propempō* is variously translated in Acts 15:3; 20:38; 21:5; Rom. 15:24; 1 Cor. 16:6, 11. Paul expected representatives of the church at Corinth to escort him, at least part of the way, when he left Corinth for Jerusalem. This would be a further manifestation of their love and respect for an apostle of Christ, their spiritual father. At least some members of the delegation from Corinth would go all the way to Jerusalem, to convey the collection received from that place (see Acts 24:17; 1 Cor. 16:1–4).

17. Lightness. Gr. *elaphria*, “lightness [of mind],” “fickleness,” “changeableness.” When Paul originally made the promise (v. 15) he intended conscientiously to fulfill it. His change in plans was not the result of fickleness on his part, but for their good (see chs. 1:23; 2:1–4). Paul now proceeds to explain and defend his change of plans against the charges made by his opponents. It had apparently been reported in Corinth that he no longer meant to come directly from Ephesus. Also, he had not heretofore personally explained things to them. His opponents had seized upon this situation to charge him with failing to keep his word and with not being dependable.

According to the flesh. Could it be possible that Paul’s decisions were arrived at on the basis of selfish interest? Did he lay his plans as men of the world do? Did he casually and capriciously alter his plans when it became apparent that his personal interest would be better served thereby?

Yea, yea, and nay nay. Had Paul actually been planning not to visit Corinth all the while he had talked about doing so? Did he mean No when he said Yes? Or was he so vacillating that he could say both Yes and No, almost in the same breath? Was it really true that no one could depend on him or know what to expect of him? Paul denies this. His projected double visit had been prevented, not by fickleness on his part, but by their faithlessness and his desire to avoid dealing harshly with them. See on Matt. 5:37; cf. James 5:12.

18. As God is true. Paul calls God to witness to the truth of his declaration. The point in debate is the fulfillment of promises. As God’s representative, how could Paul present the unchangeableness of God and His promises, and at the same time speak and act otherwise? As God is true, so Paul has been in his dealings with them. One whose preaching sets forth the complete fulfillment of God’s promises will not practice double-dealing himself.

Our word toward you. Probably Paul’s promise to visit them.

19. Son of God. See on Luke 1:35.

Preached among you. See Acts 18:1–18.

Silvanus and Timotheus. See on Acts 18:5.

In him was yea. The gospel message is positive and unequivocal. It involves no uncertainties.

20. All the promises. God’s promises are dependable.

In him are yea. That is, through Christ. All the promises of God became incarnate in Him, they met their fulfillment in Him. He is thus the evidence of the reliability of all the divine promises made to the fathers. Compare Acts 3:20, 21; Rom. 15:8. The Christian faith is an absolute certainty.

Amen. That is, true, faithful, certain (see on Matt. 5:18; John 1:51). The word here repeats the idea already expressed in “yea” (see on 2 Cor. 1:17, 18). It is not a title as in Rev. 3:14. Because the Greek reads literally, “the amen,” it has been suggested that Paul here refers to the word “Amen” uttered by Christians in affirmation of the eternal truths of the Christian faith.

Glory of God. In all of his labors Paul sought only to honor God and to advance His kingdom. See on Rom. 3:24.

By us. Through Christ the promises are proved reliable, and through His people they are proved efficacious. Through the life and ministry of Paul in particular the name of God was being glorified, and Paul could hardly make capricious promises while engaged in the proclamation of promises so certain as those of God confirmed through Christ.

To the extent that Christians follow their Master, they too become constant and steadfast—in obedience to God and in devotion to His cause on earth. Christian experience never makes men fickle. At times Paul altered his plans, but when he did so it was with undeviating loyalty to principle and to duty as it had been revealed to him.

21. He which stablisheth. It was God who had established both Paul and the Corinthians as Christians. Paul had been God’s messenger to establish them. Could one who is fickle and changeable—as they had charged Paul with being—establish others? But no credit is due Paul, for it is God who has established both him and them.

Hath anointed. Gr. *chriō*, the verb form of the word translated Christ (see on Matt. 1:1). In a sense, all Christians are anointed, or consecrated, to God, by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at the time of conversion and baptism. Possibly Paul refers to his own special consecration to the gospel ministry, but the context of 2 Cor. 1:21, 22 would appear to indicate that the general anointing of all true believers is intended. The unction of the Holy Spirit qualified and empowered those who, like Paul, had been anointed for the effective accomplishment of their work.

22. Sealed. Gr. *sphragizō*, “to mark with a seal,” “to seal,” “to authenticate,” “to confirm.” A seal is used to attest the genuineness of the document to which it is affixed. The “seal” that God places upon men and women acknowledges them as His sons and daughters, as established in Christ and dedicated to His service (v. 21). See on Eze. 9:4; John 6:27; Eph. 1:13; 4:30; Rev. 7:2, 3; 14:1.

Earnest. Gr. *arrabōn*, “earnest,” “down payment,” related to the Heb. *‘erabon*, “pledge,” as in Gen. 38:17–20. This word was in common use among Canaanite and Phoenician traders. *Arrabōn* is found frequently in the papyri, for earnest money paid for a cow, for land, for a wife, etc. It is also used of an engagement ring. It constituted a down payment, a pledge that the full sum would be paid as promised. It thus ratified the bargain. The earnest was to be payment of the same kind as that stipulated for the full amount, and was regarded as an integral part of it. In case the transaction was not completed by the purchaser, the earnest money was forfeited to the seller.

Paul here uses the figure of earnest money to illustrate the gift of the Holy Spirit to believers, as a first installment, an assurance of their full inheritance in the hereafter (see Eph. 1:13, 14; cf. Rom. 8:16). It is the Christian’s privilege to receive the settled conviction of acceptance with God as His adopted child at conversion and to retain it throughout life (see on 1 John 3:1), to accept the gift of eternal life (see on John 3:16), and to experience the transformation of character made possible by the indwelling of the

Holy Spirit (see on Rom. 8:1–4; 12:2; cf. John 16:7–11). But the joy that comes when the will is attuned to God’s will (see on Ps. 40:8), when the heart aspires to the stature of perfection in Christ Jesus (see on Matt. 5:48; Eph. 4:13, 15; 2 Peter 3:18), and when there is an uninterrupted daily walk with the Saviour—this joy is the “earnest” of a greater and eternal joy in the earth made new.

Paul enjoyed such an experience, as did those Corinthian believers who were truly converted (2 Cor. 1:21). Accordingly, the charge that he was guided by selfish motives in the change in his plans (v. 23; cf. vs. 15–17) was altogether invalid. An “earnest” is much more than a pledge. What is given as a pledge differs in kind from that for which it stands as a guarantee. Furthermore, the pledge is returned when the obligation it represents is met. In contrast, an “earnest” is part of the obligation itself. The “earnest of the Spirit” may be considered equivalent to the “firstfruits of the Spirit” (Rom. 8:23), which is a sample of what the harvest at the end of the world will be like.

Earnest money is given when there is to be some delay in completing the transaction. Sons and daughters of God are made heirs to all the blessings of heaven as soon as they enter into covenant relationship with Him (Rom. 8:17; Eph. 1:3–12; 1 John 3:1, 2); and the “earnest of the Spirit” is given to them in token of that right. In a sense, they already live in heaven (Eph 2:5, 6; Phil. 3:20). True children of God, who have this “earnest of the Spirit,” are in no state of uncertainty as to whether God has accepted them in Christ, and has in readiness for them their eternal inheritance (see on John 3:16; 1 John 3:2; 5:11). But full and complete payment—actual admission to heaven—is deferred in order to provide time for the development of character, so that the children may be fully prepared for heaven. The Christian’s title, or right, to the kingdom of heaven automatically becomes his the moment he experiences justification by faith in the imputed righteousness of Christ; fitness for the kingdom is achieved through a lifetime of appropriating the imparted righteousness of Christ and applying it to the daily problems of the Christian life (DA 300; MYP 35).

As the Holy Spirit imparts grace and power to overcome sin, the Christian experiences an “earnest” of the complete triumph and victory that will be his upon admission to heaven. Fellowship with Christ and with one another here on earth is likewise a foretaste of the fellowship of heavenly beings. Only those who have received the “earnest of the Spirit” can know what it is and what joy it brings (1 Cor. 2:11, 15). A knowledge of spiritual things comes only by experience. To those who lack such spiritual knowledge heaven is more or less unreal.

23. *God for a record.* After vindicating his recent course of action (vs. 16–22), Paul now (chs. 1:23 to 2:4) gives the reason for his changed plans for visiting Corinth, and stakes his hope of eternal life on the truthfulness of the statement he is about to make concerning the reason for his recent change of plans (see on ch. 1:17).

To spare you. His change of plans was made out of consideration for their feelings and for their best good. It was something for which they had good reason to be grateful. Had Paul kept to his original plan, he would have come to them with a rod (1 Cor. 4:21). This postponement made it possible when he did, later, come to Corinth, to spend three months there in peace and harmony and without the need of taking the severe disciplinary action that would otherwise have been necessary.

24. *Dominion over your faith.* The expression “to spare you” (v. 23) might have been misunderstood by the Corinthians as an effort on Paul’s part to lord it over them. Paul

desires to leave them no excuse for thinking that he aspires to stand in the place of God toward them. No man—not even Paul the apostle—has the right to exercise authority over men’s consciences. To do so would be to usurp divine authority. How impressive is Paul’s humility, in contrast with the arrogance of later leaders of the church who, in the name of the apostles, usurped divine jurisdiction over the consciences and souls of men (see Additional Note on Dan. 7). In administering the affairs of the church today, or in counseling church members, leaders should always beware of interposing between the conscience and God. Every man is accountable directly to God for his own conscience, as he is for his actions.

Helpers of your joy. What Paul had done he did as their friend, not as their master.

By faith ye stand. The majority of the Corinthians had stood firm in the faith in spite of the winds of doctrine and disaffection that had blown over the church like a storm and shaken it to its foundations.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

2–4RC 61

3, 4 MB 13; 5T 489

3–8AA 325

4 MH 256; 6T 347; WM 22

5 MB 13

7 AA 261

20 FE 341; TM 381; 5T 631

22 MH 37

CHAPTER 2

1 *Having shewed the reason why he came not to them, 6 he requireth them to forgive and to comfort that excommunicated person, 10 even as himself also upon his true repentance had forgiven him, 12 declaring withal why he departed from Troas to Macedonia, 14 and the happy success which God gave to his preaching in all places.*

1. Again. It is not clear from the Greek whether this word should be coupled with the noun “heaviness” or with the verb “come.” The last part of v. 1 reads, literally, “not again in heaviness to you to come.” If “again” goes with “heaviness,” the meaning is, “I would not pay you a second painful visit.” According to this interpretation Paul had already paid the Corinthian church one painful visit since the original visit of Acts 18:1–18. If “again” goes with “come,” the meaning is, “I would not have my second visit to you be a painful one.” According to this interpretation Paul had not been to Corinth since his original visit.

In favor of the view of two previous visits, the second of which was presumably made “in heaviness,” 2 Cor. 12:14; 13:1 are usually cited. However, the Greek construction of these passages is not conclusive (see comment there). In favor of but one previous visit it may be noted that neither Luke nor Paul either mentions or makes a clear allusion to a second previous visit. There was nothing painful—in the sense here intended—about the visit of Acts 18:1–18; and chs. 19:8, 10; 20:31 strongly imply that there was no interruption in the Ephesian ministry—the only time during which a second visit could have been made—for a journey to Corinth. Had there been such a visit it would seem logical to expect at least a brief, unambiguous mention of it in Acts or Corinthians. In 2 Cor. 1:19 Paul speaks of his first visit to Corinth as if he had not been there since that time. In v. 15 he speaks of a visit he had since been “minded” to make—but seems to have postponed—as “a second benefit.”

In ch. 2:1–4 Paul continues the explanation of his decision not to go directly from Ephesus to Corinth, begun in ch. 1:15. The Corinthians may have imagined that Paul sought to lord it over them (see on ch. 1:24), while all the time he was grieving over their sins and their coldness toward him. His only thought was for the well-being of the Corinthians as individuals and as a church.

Heaviness. Gr. *lupē*, “sorrow,” “pain,” “grief.”

2. Make ... sorry. Gr. *lupeō*, “to make sad,” “to cause grief.” Paul was grieved by evils rampant in the church, and his previous letter of reproof had no doubt saddened the sincerehearted members of the church, as it had angered others (cf. ch. 10:9, 10). Under such circumstances a second visit would have been painful both to him and to them. This would compound the sadness for all concerned. But if his letter could first accomplish its intended result, another visit would prove mutually joyful.

3. I wrote. Paul here probably refers to 1 Corinthians, though possibly to the letter mentioned in 1 Cor. 5:9. Arguments to the effect that the context here (2 Cor. 2:3, 4) and in ch. 7:8–12 precludes the possibility of reference to 1 Corinthians are not convincing (see p. 822; 1 Cor. 3 to 6).

This same unto you. Gr. *touto auto*, which should probably be translated “this very thing,” though possibly, “for this very reason.” Paul had written that previous letter of censure and admonition in the hope that it might effect a reformation (see on v. 2).

Ought to rejoice. Paul’s supreme joy was that of seeing men and women experience the new birth and grow up into Christ. His happiness depended upon their spiritual state of health. Paul could not be happy while they were weak or downcast. The work of the gospel minister is to dispense joy, not sorrow. Christ desired His own joy to be reflected in the hearts and lives of His disciples (John 17:13).

Of you all. Paul believed that what brought joy to him would also bring joy to them.

4. Anguish. Gr. *sunochē*, “distress,” “anguish,” literally, “a holding together,” that is, a tenseness. The thought is that the heart seems to be under great pressure, and that the pressure produces grief.

I wrote. See on v. 3.

Many tears. Paul had administered stern reproof and discipline, not in anger but in sorrow. Christ wept as He yearned for His people (Matt. 23:37, 38). Reproof intended to win back the erring must never be done in harshness or with an overbearing attitude, but with great tenderness and compassion. Paul possessed boundless courage in the face of danger, persecution, and death, but he wept when compelled to censure his brethren in Christ (see Acts 20:31; Phil. 3:18).

Successful dealing with sinners is not achieved by bitter denunciation, by ridicule or sarcasm, by making public their sins. What these harsh weapons cannot accomplish may be done by affectionate concern, with “many tears.” The unfortunate spectacle of a church member falling into sin awakens anguish and distress in the mind of every true follower of Christ. Godly concern and Christlike love unite the church and prevent differences of opinion concerning those disciplined.

The ministry needs men who will not palliate or excuse sin, nor shrink from rebuking evil (cf. Eze. 9:4). They are men who, while dealing courageously with evil in the church, are constrained by the love of Christ (2 Cor. 5:14). They are, in a special sense, repairers of the “breach” and restorers of “paths to dwell in” (Isa. 58:12; see Heb. 13:7, 17). It is

never a demonstration of love to pass by sin. Sometimes love must needs be severe. Love in the church does not mean the display of pity and long-suffering toward obdurate members at the expense of the integrity of the church or the safety of other members. To consider love as something always necessarily flaccid is to identify it with weakness, lack of initiative, forcefulness, and courage. The minister's love for his people means more than a feeling of tender emotion for them, it means also a continuous attitude of concern for their well-being, joy in their spiritual growth, sadness over their sins, strong leadership, and firm, unyielding courage when the enemy of souls seeks to scatter the flock. Paul, as a minister of the everlasting gospel, was prepared to go through any amount of suffering, even to the sacrifice of life itself, for the salvation of others. There was nothing weak or effeminate about his love. Neither Jesus nor Paul invest love with sickly sentimentality. Both continually reveal the capacity for noble and difficult accomplishments and strength to overcome the devil in whatever guise he may appear to attack the church. See on Matt. 5:43, 44.

Know the love. Paul's purpose in writing was not to cause sorrow, but to express, if possible, the ardent love that guided the apostle in all his relations with them (see on ch. 5:14). If they could first realize that all he said was spoken in love they would be able the better to profit by it.

5. Caused grief. There is a difference of opinion as to whether Paul here refers to the incestuous person of 1 Cor. 5:1 or to the ringleader of opposition to him. Reasons set forth for both are inconclusive. However, because there is no specific reference in Scripture to the ringleader, as there is to the incestuous person, this commentary assumes that Paul refers to the latter. From the first epistle it appears that this case of immorality had been the most acute problem in the Corinthian church. The case had been aggravated by the open toleration of this offender and by the stubborn refusal, for a time, to deal effectively with it. This passage (2 Cor. 2:5–11) reveals that the church had by now complied with Paul's instructions and had disfellowshipped the offender. This course of action had evidently led him to genuine repentance. Paul here counsels his restoration and reinstatement in the church.

Paul's method of dealing with an erring member provides a commendable example for similar cases today. Paul's firmness and severity toward the man while he remained unrepentant gave way to great tenderness once he had repented. Paul now sought to mitigate the contrite man's burden of guilt and condemnation, and to restore him to favor with his brethren. Never once does he mention the man's name, but considerately speaks of him as "such a one" (v. 7). There is no needless repetition of the man's sins to wound his feelings. Today his name is known only to God. This is the spirit and method of Christ in dealing with such cases (see John 8:10, 11; see on Matt. 18:1–35). How different from those who would publicize the names of offenders and thereby crush them with unnecessary pain and dishonor! Where there is genuine repentance the case should be brought to a close, with no further reference to the incident and with wholehearted acceptance of the forgiven person.

Not grieved me. No personal motives had been involved in the stern measures recommended by Paul. His grief had been over the distress and confusion that had come to the church.

But in part. The latter part of the verse may be rendered more clearly, “but to some extent all of you—lest I be too severe [toward the repentant offender].” The offense was not so much against Paul as against the entire Corinthian church.

Overcharge. Gr. *epibareō*, “to put a burden upon.” Now that the case had been settled, Paul deliberately avoided wounding the offender by appearing to magnify the offense.

6. Sufficient. The objective of church discipline had been accomplished; the offender had repented, and it was now time to restore him to the confidence and fellowship of his brethren. Christian discipline is a work of love, not of vengeance. Its objective is not revenge, but restoration. It must uphold the commandments of God and maintain church order. It must safeguard the other members of the church and protect the good name of the church, but it should also, wherever possible, lead the sinner to repentance. It must serve as a warning to other potential offenders and a deterrent to a repetition of the offense.

Punishment. Or, “penalty,” implying a merited judgment.

Of many. That is, by the majority. The church had complied with Paul’s recommendation in the case, but the decision had not been unanimous. The dissenting minority doubtless included some who tended to be lax in morals themselves, members of the Judaizing faction, and a few who resented Paul’s interference in the case, challenged his authority, or objected to so severe a penalty. Remedial discipline—as contrasted with punitive discipline—requires patience and understanding. In this instance it had become the responsibility of the whole church (see 1 Cor. 12:20–27). Paul might have taken the opposition of the dissident minority as a personal affront and responded to its misrepresentation and criticism in a spirit of bitterness and vindictiveness, but he did not.

7. So that contrariwise. Having made an incision and accomplished his purpose, a surgeon binds up the wound and seeks to restore his patient to health. The offender at Corinth had been deprived of Christian fellowship by the majority of the church members. But now that he had repented, further discipline would be vindictive and punitive, and would tend to discourage him from being loyal to his new resolve.

Comfort him. Forgiveness was not enough. The church was to receive this returning brother as God receives a penitent sinner into His favor. The offense should be forgiven and forgotten. It is the duty of the church to treat every true penitent with kindness (see on Luke 15:7; Eph. 4:32).

Swallowed up. Or, “overwhelmed,” as if drowning. Excessive sorrow or calamity is often compared to floodwaters (see Ps. 69:1; 124:2–5; Isa. 8:7, 8). We commonly speak of being overwhelmed with grief or drowned in sorrow. Paul was genuinely concerned for the repentant man’s soul. There must be no evidence of continued rejection or disdain by church members, lest excessive grief overwhelm him and drive him back into sin.

8. Confirm. Gr. *kuroō*, “to ratify,” “to confirm,” “to reaffirm” (cf. Gal. 3:15). It was a legal term used of validating an agreement. Here it means to ratify or confirm by decree or vote of the church (see on Matt. 18:18). Acting in its corporate capacity, the church should revoke its former action and restore the man to fellowship. Discipline had been administered by a formal action on the part of the church; restoration to fellowship should be no less public and official. The man was to have full assurance of the favor of his

brethren in the church. Thus, in the future, no question as to the validity of his reinstatement could arise.

9. Did I write. See on v. 3.

The proof. Another reason for Paul's instruction regarding the church offender in his former epistle was his desire to test their obedience and loyalty. Events had now proved them loyal. They had measured up to the test by dealing faithfully with sin in the church. This test, however, was not so much one of obedience to Paul's authority as to that of Christ. They submitted to Paul as an apostle, a direct representative of Jesus Christ, and as one to whom the Lord said: "He that heareth you heareth me" (Luke 10:16).

10. Whom ye forgive. Because the Corinthian church had given full proof of its loyalty to principle, Paul now unites with its members in the proposed vote of confidence. He fully recognizes the authority of the church, under Christ, to deal with its own problems (see Matt. 16:19; 18:17, 18; John 20:23). Christ has delegated authority to the church as a corporate body, acting under the direction and presidency, as it were, of the Holy Spirit.

Various scholars have noted that this is the only specific instance on record in the NT of the exercise of ecclesiastical authority to retain and remit sins, and that here it is exercised by Paul, not by Peter. This power was given by Christ to the apostles collectively and as representatives of the Christian church (see John 20:23).

Person of Christ. Rather, "presence of Christ," or "before Christ." There is no basis for concluding that either the apostle or the church had power to release the man from accountability for his sins before God. None but God could do that (see Mark 2:7–11). If the man had sincerely repented, God, according to His promise, had already forgiven him (Jer. 31:34; 1 John 1:9). Paul's vote to forgive was simply the human acknowledgment that God had already pardoned him (see on Matt. 16:19). God has authorized His representatives on earth to assure the forgiveness of Heaven to every repentant soul.

11. Lest Satan. Paul had instructed the Corinthians to deliver the sinner "unto Satan" (1 Cor. 5:4, 5), with a view to his ultimate salvation. But if the church failed to forgive and restore the repentant offender, Satan would still gain an advantage. He gains an advantage not only by leading people into sin but also by our failure to forgive them when they repent.

Devices. Or, "designs." Satan is constantly seeking to injure and destroy the souls of men. His designs are directed particularly against the church and against individuals who aspire to follow Christ. He sometimes succeeds in perverting even the best and purest plans and efforts of individuals, and even of the church. Where the salvation of the individual is lost sight of, hearts will be embittered or driven to despair, and irritation and division will injure the church.

Satan's designs are accomplished in rash and misguided zeal of church members, by harsh and rigid pretensions at perfection, by a critical and censorious spirit, by cold indifference to the fate of men, by tithing mint and anise and cummin and omitting the weightier matters of the law—justice, mercy, and faith (Matt. 23:23). God's character is thus maligned and misunderstood, His cause is dishonored, and the standing of the church is seriously impaired.

The Christian deals not simply with some error of judgment and conduct in an offending brother but with a personal foe (see on Matt. 4:1). It was a personal devil that tempted our Lord in the wilderness (Matt. 4:1–11). Paul had been buffeted by a

“messenger of Satan” (2 Cor. 12:7), and knew from experience the kind of adversary he had to face. He recognized the devil for what he is. His clear spiritual perception pierced the disguise used by Satan, and he overcame him by the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God (Eph. 6:16, 17; 1 John 2:14). Victory over our adversary comes by following the admonition to “put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil” (Eph. 6:11). Compare GC 516.

12. *Came to Troas.* Verses 12, 13 reveal Paul’s deep personal affection for the Corinthian believers and his unabated interest in their welfare. He had apparently dispatched Titus to Corinth to work for the restoration of harmony and to obtain a full report of conditions and of how the Corinthians received his letter of reproof (cf. AA 323). It seems that they had agreed to meet each other at Troas, but Titus had apparently been prevented from keeping that appointment. Anxiety overwhelmed Paul as he imagined that his worst fears about the Corinthian church had come true. This frame of mind made it impossible for him to labor effectively at Troas. Concerning the city of Troas and Paul’s previous visit there see on Acts 16:8–11. Paul again visited Troas on his return from Corinth, en route to Jerusalem (Acts 20:6–12), and also after his release from his first imprisonment at Rome (see on 2 Tim. 4:13).

Christ’s gospel. That is, the gospel that proceeds from Christ. Upon leaving Ephesus, Paul had intended to devote some considerable time to evangelistic labors at Troas.

A door. Apparently there was a ready response to Paul’s preaching at Troas. The figure of a door to represent opportunity appears elsewhere in 1 Cor. 16:9 (see on Rev. 3:8). Divine providence had opened many doors for Paul, including the door of escape from death (see 2 Cor. 1:8–10). Paul saw God’s hand in the light and in the darkness, in sunshine and in rain. He even saw God’s hand turning the “thorn” in his “flesh” to a good purpose (ch. 12:7). The Christian must ever be alert for the providence of God upon his pathway—earnestly watching, patiently waiting, promptly obeying, and thankfully rejoicing.

13. *No rest.* Paul’s state of anxiety continued until he finally met Titus in Macedonia. So overwhelming was his anxiety that he could not tarry to preach in Troas, even though the prospects there were bright. Here is evidence of Paul’s intense personal interest in his converts. We have no other record of Paul’s turning away from “an open door.” The most successful worker for God is not always above deep emotion that may unsettle him and render it impossible for him to continue his work for a time. While crisis confronted the work of Christ at Corinth, Paul could neither rest nor concentrate his faculties on other activities.

Into Macedonia. Macedonia lay on the way to Corinth, and there Paul could expect to meet Titus sooner than at Troas.

14. *Thanks be unto God.* Irrepressible anxiety gives way to exuberant joy when Paul reaches Macedonia and meets Titus. Paul here begins a lengthy exposition on the motives and spiritual power of the gospel minister as exemplified in his own life. This is the theme of his letter through ch. 7:4. No passage in the Scriptures gives so earnest and impassioned a portrayal of the inner experience of a true ambassador for Christ (see ch. 5:20).

Causeth ... to triumph. Gr. *thriambeuō*, “to triumph,” that is, to celebrate a triumph or to lead in a triumphal procession, the sense in which Paul uses this verb in Col. 2:15 and the sense in which it is always used in the papyri. The translation here should

probably be “leads ... in triumph.” It is not Paul and his co-workers who triumph, rather, they, as captives of the Lord Jesus Christ, are led by Him in triumphal procession as they go through the world proclaiming the gospel, living examples of His triumph over the powers of darkness (Col. 2:15).

Thriambeuō is related to *thriambos*, a hymn sung in connection with processions celebrating great military victories. The famous Roman triumph was conferred on successful generals by the Roman Senate, in celebration of some outstanding military victory or campaign. A victorious general was welcomed by government officials at the gates of the imperial city, where the triumphal march began. First came the Senators, preceded by a body of magistrates. After the Senators came trumpeters, heralding the approach of the victor. Then followed a long train of carts laden with the spoils of war. Articles of great value, rarity, or beauty were fully exposed to view. There were also white bulls and oxen destined for sacrifice. Here and there incense bearers waved their censers to and fro, perfuming the air. Lions, tigers, elephants, and other strange animals from the captive lands often appeared in the procession. After these came the captive kings, princes, or generals, and a long train of inferior captives, bound and fettered. Next came the great conqueror himself, standing in a splendid chariot. A crown of laurel or gold was upon his head. In one hand he held a branch of laurel, the emblem of victory, and in the other his truncheon or staff of authority. Following him marched many of those who had fought under him—officers, horse soldiers, foot soldiers—each holding aloft a spear adorned with laurel boughs. The procession moved on through the crowded streets, along the Via Sacra, through the Triumphal Arch to the Capitoline hill (see Paul at Rome). There it halted, and some of the captives were executed in cold blood or thrown into prison to await death in the Colosseum. Others, considered worthy of pardon, were set free. Animal sacrifices were offered to the Roman gods, and the triumphal feast began.

Paul envisions Christ as a great conqueror, leading the conquered in a triumphal procession. Paul, his co-workers, and all those won to Christ by them are captives in God’s great triumph. Paul does not speak of himself as the triumphant commander of God’s army, but gives God all the glory. For Paul to be led in triumph as a trophy of divine grace accords with his habitual attitude and feelings (see 1 Cor. 4:9, 10; 2 Cor. 4:10; 11:23; Col. 1:24). He here emphasizes God’s successful use of him as an evangelist. God is leading him and his fellow workers about in triumph. Everywhere the gospel was gaining such victories and triumphs as had been won in the Corinthian church. All true Christians are God’s slaves (see Rom. 6:16), trophies of the Redeemer’s victorious campaign against sin. To see Paul, a captive chained to the chariot of Christ, was to see what Christ could do for reprobate men. God was leading him up and down the world, an example of His conquering power and matchless grace. The grandest of all victories is the victory over sin through the power of Christ. He who conquers the moral and spiritual foes of the soul achieves a far grander triumph than he who conquers an opposing army upon the battlefield (cf. Prov. 16:32).

The savour. That is, fragrance scattered by the incense bearers along the route of the procession. Clouds of incense rose from wayside altars and were wafted from censers and from open temples. The entire city was filled with the smoke of sacrifices and the fragrance of flowers and incense. Paul thinks of himself as an incense bearer in the triumphal procession of Christ.

Knowledge. In the Greek this word stands in apposition to “savour.” Thus the knowledge of Christ becomes the fragrance of which Paul speaks. Through Paul’s ministry and that of his fellow workers, through the righteousness of Christ manifest in the lives of His followers, this spiritual savor is manifested in every place, in the church at Corinth, in fact, throughout Achaia.

In every place. That is, wherever Paul had been. Less than 35 years after the crucifixion the gospel had been extensively preached throughout the Mediterranean world (see Acts 19:10, 26, 27; Rom. 1:8; 15:18, 19).

15. Sweet savour. Euōdia, from two words meaning “good” and “smell.” *Euōdia* is applied to persons or things well pleasing to God (see Eph. 5:2; Phil. 4:18). In the LXX it is used of the incense in the tabernacle (see Ex. 29:18; Lev. 1:9; 2:2; etc.).

Paul is still thinking of the aroma of incense in the streets of Rome during a triumph, but the figure changes slightly. In 2 Cor. 2:14 the odor represents the knowledge of God, diffused through human representatives. In v. 15 Paul and his fellow ministers constitute the odor of Christ. Christ is the primary medium through which God diffuses the knowledge that is from above; Paul and his fellow ministers are the secondary medium. They become one with Christ, who lives in them (Gal. 2:20) and manifests the fragrance of spiritual things through them.

Are saved. Literally, “are being saved.” Those who are being saved are saved by the grace of Christ; those who are lost are responsible for the loss of their own souls.

To return to the figure of the Roman triumph. Some who marched in the procession were on their way to execution, others to release or triumph. Both groups breathed the perfume as they marched along. To one it was a reminder of death, to the other a reminder of life. So it is with the gospel. To those who accept it, it becomes the pledge of a happy future, but to those who reject it, it becomes a warning of death. The preaching of the gospel never leaves a man in the same state in which it finds him. It either leads him on to eternal life or hardens him so that he rejects life (see on v. 16). It either subdues or hardens, alienates or reconciles. The gospel changes not, it is always the “power of God unto salvation” (Rom. 1:16), but those who reject it are condemned by it (see on Matt. 7:21–27; Mark 16:16; John 3:17–21). He who came to be the chief cornerstone of men’s lives becomes “a stone of stumbling” to those who reject Him (1 Peter 2:8).

16. To the one. Christ is life or death to men as they accept or reject Him. This is inevitably so because He is the one and only source of life. Once confronted by truth as it is in Christ, no man can avoid making a decision. This contrast between the intended saving effect of the gospel and its opposite effect of condemnation is often alluded to in the NT (see John 3:19; 15:22; 1 Cor. 1:18, 23, 24). The sun, which imparts life to a tree that is planted in good soil, decomposes and destroys it if it is plucked up and exposed on the surface of the ground. Sunlight melts wax, but hardens clay. The difference is in the substances themselves. Even so with human hearts, some are melted, some hardened, depending on their individual response to the gospel.

Who is sufficient? The question is rhetorical. Paul senses the solemnity of the responsibility resting upon him for the salvation of men. This sense of responsibility was an important contributing factor to his success. It was this that had made him feel so deeply concerned over the state of affairs in Corinth (see on v. 13). This feeling of concern grows out of a deep sense of the importance of the task and of the value of souls. The minister who truly believes the truths of God’s Word, particularly those that have to

do with the nearness of the end of time, cannot be indifferent toward lost men and women.

The minister of the gospel is responsible for how he lives, for what he preaches, and for the faithful delivery of his message. The responsibility of being an ambassador for God surpasses that of any other calling. Only as the ambassador for Christ is a living example of the message he proclaims, and as he lives in uninterrupted contact with the One whom he represents, can he expect to be “sufficient for these things.”

17. Many. Literally, “the many,” that is, those who opposed Paul. Apparently a large number of church members in Corinth had concluded that “the many” could not be wrong. To them the only important question was, Which is the popular side?

Which corrupt. Literally, “retailers,” “peddlers,” “hucksters,” “sharp dealers.” The word thus translated is always used in an uncomplimentary sense. It was used, for instance, of a retailer of wine, or vintner, who adulterated his wine by adding either water or some other inferior mixture, in order to make a greater profit. It came also to be used in an intellectual sense. Plato thus refers to philosophers who, according to his way of thinking, adulterated true philosophy.

Paul now speaks of those who adulterate, or deal deceitfully with, the Word of God. “The many” at Corinth were like dishonest tavernkeepers and wine peddlers, dispensing a gospel corrupted with human theories and traditions. According to Rev. 17:2 the apostate church makes the inhabitants of the earth drunk with the wine of her fornication, that is, the wine of adulterated, false doctrines. False teachers are content with a counterfeit, with a cheap substitute, with superficial obedience, with trying to achieve righteousness by works. They sell the Word for personal profit, at a low price of personal sacrifice on the part of the buyer. The methods and teachings of such hucksters of religion are often alluded to in Scripture (Isa. 50:11; 2 Cor. 10:12, 13; 11:13–15; 2 Tim. 4:3; 2 Peter 2:1–18).

A man corrupts the Word of God when he considers it primarily as a means of making a livelihood, when he tempers either its goodness or its severity, when he eases the high requirements it makes of Christians, or when he preaches himself, his cleverness, or his own learning. Thus he makes the Word minister to him, instead of ministering the Word.

As of sincerity. The successful minister of the gospel is conscious that God has sent him, conscious that God sees him, conscious of the spirit of Christ within him. The true preacher will be free from all self-seeking, all duplicity and hypocrisy, all sordid motives, all cravings for popularity and fame. He will preach the Word, with Christ as its center.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

4 AA 300; MH 166

11 GC 516; PK 654; 1T 211, 304, 707; 2T 143, 313; 3T 476; 6T 446

12, 13 AA 323

14, 15 RC 61

14–16AA 326; 6T 316

15–172T 706

16 AA 249, 369, 423, 510, 551; AH 37; CG 64; CH 342, 559; CM 125; COL 277, 298, 304, 337, 340; CT 197; DA 439; Ed 282; Ev 208, 297, 383, 561, 631; EW 62; FE 109, 262; GW 78, 120; ML 22, 32, 178, 190; MM 173, 181, 227, 246; MYP 364; PK 86, 128, 232, 234; TM 144, 158, 223, 309, 318; 1T 139, 591; 2T 124, 152, 187, 343, 669; 3T 31,

60, 216, 306; 4T 69, 198, 308, 371, 446, 524; 5T 157, 345, 716; 6T 63, 122, 173, 317, 319, 371; 7T 36, 93, 155, 157; 8T 23, 144, 233; WM 287

¹

CHAPTER 3

¹ *Lest their false teachers should charge him with vainglory, he sheweth the faith and graces of the Corinthians to be a sufficient commendation of his ministry. 6 Whereupon entering a comparison between the ministers of the law and of the gospel, 12 he proveth that his ministry is so far the more excellent, as the gospel of life and liberty is more glorious than the law of condemnation.*

1. Commend ourselves. In ch. 2:17 Paul contrasts himself and his co-workers with the false leaders who had gone to Corinth and there corrupted the Word of God. There was the strong possibility that Paul's clear statement might be misinterpreted and thus provoke criticism. Was Paul commending himself? Was he boasting and exalting himself and his co-workers? Had he not frequently referred to himself in glowing terms (1 Cor. 2:6; 3:10; 4:1; 9:15)? Perhaps the false teachers had introduced themselves to the Corinthian believers by letters of recommendation from the church at Jerusalem, which would make it appear that they were actually in good and regular standing and had the backing of the apostles. Thus their credentials would appear to be better than those of Paul (cf. Acts 13:1–3; Gal. 2:7, 9). See on 2 Cor. 5:12.

Commendation. Literally, “standing together,” meaning that the bearer of the letter was in good standing with the writer of the letter. Such a letter was intended to identify workers traveling in a region where they were not known personally, and thus to protect the churches against false teachers. Letters of introduction are mentioned repeatedly (Acts 18:27; Col. 4:10). But there were spurious epistles, even as there were false apostles. Obviously the letters of commendation that some had presented at Corinth had been accepted as genuine. Evidently Paul had not carried identifying letters as a Christian missionary, and his critics at Corinth now disparaged him as an apostle and questioned his authority.

2. Our epistle. Paul now uses the word “epistle” figuratively. He had no need of literal introductory letters, for his converts were an all-sufficient proof of his apostleship. He needed no written documents to establish his apostolic authority. The metaphor of a written letter signifies both that the Corinthian believers had the word and law of God written on their hearts and that they were living epistles written on Paul's heart. The first constituted evidence that they were true Christians, and the second that Paul was a true apostle. They were the “seal” of his “apostleship” (1 Cor. 9:2).

Our hearts. Textual evidence may be cited (cf. p. 10) for reading “your hearts.”

3. Manifestly declared. Literally, “made known,” “revealed.” The world has need of more legible Christians. The language of a Christlike life is intended for all mankind. Only thus can men comprehend what Christianity means, understand its great truths, and learn to love and obey God's law.

Epistle of Christ. Each believer and each church should be a letter from Christ to the world. The author of the letter is Christ. The material on which the writing is done is the

¹Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (2 Co 1:1). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.

heart of each believer, and that which is written is the law of God, a transcript of His character. The penman in this case was Paul.

Christ wrote the Ten Commandments with His own finger on tables of stone (Ex. 24:12; 31:18; Deut. 9:10, 11; cf. PP 366). He inspired men to write the Bible (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20, 21), and is thus its author also. If they will, men can see and find Christ in the law, in the Scriptures, and in those who believe in Him.

Ministered by us. Christ used Paul as His penman, or amanuensis. Paul did not originate or dictate the letter written in the hearts of his converts. But he was God's instrument in the writing of this living epistle. Faithful ministers of the Word in the church today constitute God's penmen to this generation.

Not with ink. Ancient letters were usually written on papyrus, with a reed pen and a black pigment for ink (see 2 John 12). Paul's letters to the churches were doubtless thus written. But when it comes to writing on the tables of the human heart, that is, of the mind, a more durable medium is required, and that medium is the spirit of the living God. Where the Holy Spirit is at work in the life, God's law and God's truth are manifested in holiness, obedience, and sanctification. Obedience to all the will of God becomes spontaneous. The writing of which Paul here speaks affects not only the intellect but the will and the affections as well (Ps. 1:2; 119:16).

The apostle's adversaries, the Judaizers, had written no such letter in the hearts of the Corinthian believers as Paul had. Their ministry was limited to the letter of the law. They were concerned almost exclusively with its outward forms; its spirit had never been engraved upon their hearts. What Jewish legalism could not accomplish—for a lack of faith on the part of those who practiced it (Heb. 4:2)—the gospel was now accomplishing (Rom. 8:3, 4). A literal adherence to the letter of Judaism did not transfer the principles of truth to men's hearts. The Jewish practice of religion remained formal and mechanical—it lacked spirit.

Tables of stone. Or, "tablets of stone." Paul contrasts the two tablets of stone upon which God wrote the Ten Commandments at Sinai with the fleshly tablets of the heart. There was nothing wrong about having the law of God inscribed upon tables of stone, but so long as it was written only there, and was not transferred to the tables of men's hearts, it remained, for all practical purposes, a dead letter. Truth has living, active force only when it is applied to the problems of life. Paul here anticipates his discussion of the new covenant in vs. 6–11. The new-covenant experience is referred to in such passages of Scripture as Jer. 31:31–33; Eze. 11:19, 20; 36:26, 27; Heb. 8:8–10.

Only God has the power to reach the heart and write His law there. It is easier for Him to write His law on tablets of stone, for they have no will to resist. Once the law is written on the heart, it is no longer a dead letter. Paper and stone are transitory. Not so with the law written on the heart and in the life.

Moses descended from Sinai bearing two slabs of stone, a visible evidence that he had been with God and came forth from the mount as God's appointed spokesman. Though Paul's credentials were not of a tangible kind, they were no less real, for the same divine law had been inscribed by the Holy Spirit in his own heart and in the hearts of his converts. Paul needed no other credentials. His life and the lives of those whom he had led to Christ constituted sufficient evidence that his commission was of God.

4. Such trust. Paul's literal-minded critics had misinterpreted his confidence and sufficiency as boasting and self-commendation. On the contrary, his confidence was the

result of his consciousness of being under the constant guidance and influence of Christ (cf. ch. 5:14). Therefore, all honor and praise belonged to Christ, not to him. Foolish, vain self-confidence is a vice, but confidence in God is a great Christian virtue (1 Cor. 13:13; Gal. 5:22, 23). The first boastfully credits to self all success in the ministry, the other humbly credits it to God.

5. *Sufficient.* Gr. *hikanos*, “sufficient,” “enough.” The noun form of the word is translated “sufficiency” later in v. 5, and its verb form, “made ... able,” in v. 6. Paul has discharged his God-appointed commission to the best of his ability, and does not hesitate to express confidence that his ministry has been a success. But all credit for being an effective instrument belongs to God.

Think any thing. That is, to arrive at any conclusions respecting his own ministry. Though his own appraisal of his workmanship might be faulty, no one can deny that his labors have been fruitful for the kingdom. The principles of the kingdom are indelibly inscribed upon the hearts and lives of his converts.

Of ourselves. That is, from ourselves, originating with ourselves. Paul denies any credit whatever for the success that has attended his ministry.

6. *Made us able.* In vs. 6–18 Paul sets forth the superiority of “the ministration of the spirit” (v. 8), which he represents, over “the ministration of death,” the now-obsolete Jewish system, represented by his Judaizing opponents. He draws this contrast by comparing the “glory” of the new covenant with that of the Mosaic period, and by exposing his Judaizing opponents as exponents of the letter of the law rather than of the spirit of it. He designates the Jewish priesthood as a ministry “of the letter,” in contrast with that of Christian ministers as a ministry “of the spirit.” A minister “of the letter” of the law administered a system of rules and regulations. His object was to secure conformity to external requirements. But God had made Paul a minister “of the spirit” of all God’s revealed will. He had been educated according to the rigid letter of the law (Acts 22:3; Phil. 3:4–6), but the spirit of life in Christ Jesus had set him free from that rigid system (Rom. 8:2). He had renounced the ministry “of the letter” for that “of the spirit.” (Rom. 8:1, 2; 2 Cor. 5:17).

The one type of ministry has sufficiency to save men from sin and to make them children of God, the other has not (Eph. 3:7). The one has the Holy Spirit, the other has not. The ministry “of the spirit” is able to convict of sin, the other is not (John 16:8, 9, 13; Eph. 3:7; 1 Tim. 1:11–16).

The ministry “of the letter”—the forms of religion—and that “of the spirit” (see on John 4:23, 24) need not have been mutually exclusive (see on Mark 2:21, 22; 7:6–9). But the ministry “of the letter” came to be, in actual practice, a perversion of the true gospel which had been revealed to Moses and to all the prophets (DA 29, 30, 35, 36).

New testament. Literally, “new covenant” (see on Matt. 26:28). Paul contrasts the new covenant with the old, the one being identified with the spirit and the other with the letter. Under the old covenant, Jewish reverence for the simple “letter” of the law practically became idolatry. It stifled the “spirit.” The Jews chose to live under the dominion of the “letter” of the law. Their obedience to the law, to ritual, and to the prescribed ceremonies was formal and external. A Christian’s devotion and obedience will not be characterized by any mechanical method, by elaborate rules and requirements, but by the presence and power of the Spirit of God.

Not of the letter. The contrast between “letter” and “spirit” in Scripture is peculiar to the apostle Paul (see on Rom. 2:27–29; 7:6). The one is outward, the other inward. Both Jews and Christians are in danger of stressing the “letter” to the exclusion of the “spirit.” The OT, as well as the NT, constitutes an inspired revelation by the Holy Spirit (2 Tim. 3:15–17). God intended Judaism to have both “letter” and “spirit”—a record of God’s revealed will and certain prescribed forms, translated into a living experience (see on John 4:23, 24). The same is true of Christianity. Formal creeds, theoretical theology, and the forms of worship have no power to save men from sin.

In that it had come from God the “letter” of the law as recorded in the writings of Moses was good. But God had intended the “letter,” the written record of the law, to be only a means to the higher end of establishing the “spirit” of the law in the hearts of the Jews. But, as a whole, the Israelites failed to translate the “letter” of the law into the “spirit” of the law, that is, into a living religious experience of personal salvation from sin by faith in the atonement to be provided by the Messiah. The literal observance, alone, of the law “killeth.” Only the “spirit” of the law can possibly give “life,” whether it be to Jew or to Christian. The practice of Christianity can easily degenerate into a mere “form of godliness” without “the power thereof” (2 Tim. 3:5), so that the “letter” of Christianity “killeth” those who rely on it for salvation.

In Paul’s day, Judaism had so far lost the “spirit” of true religion that its religious observances consisted only of the “letter.” As a system it had lost the power to impart life to its adherents (see on Mark 2:21, 22; John 1:17). On the other hand, Christianity was still young and virile, although in centuries to come it, too, was to become degenerate (see Additional Note on Dan. 7). Thus, when Paul wrote, Judaism was identified with the “letter,” and Christianity, in so far as it was free from the influence of the Judaizers, was identified with the “spirit.”

The argument of some that Paul here depreciates the OT and the Decalogue is without foundation in fact. Writing to Gentile Christians, Paul repeatedly affirms the bidding force of the OT and the Decalogue upon Christians (see on Rom. 8:1–4; 2 Tim. 3:15–17; cf. on Matt. 5:17–19). Christ and the apostles had no other “scriptures” than the OT (see on John 5:39). The galaxy of the faithful whose names are recorded in Heb. 11, together with many thousands of believers in OT times, experienced the quickening work of the Holy Spirit in their lives, just as others did in NT times.

Every church and every creed has its “letter” as well as its “spirit.” The gospel of Jesus Christ has its “letter” and its “spirit.” Without the quickening power of the Holy Spirit, the gospel in any church inevitably becomes a dead letter. Thousands of professed Christians are satisfied with the “letter” and remain wholly without spiritual life. What God requires is not simply right action, but right action as the product and evidence of a right relationship with God and a right state of moral and spiritual being. To reduce Christian life and worship to compliance with a system of rules, rather than to make it a matter of reliance upon the living God, is to depend upon the service and ministry of the “letter.” The formal acts and ceremonies of religion, whether Jewish or Christian, are but a means to an end. If treated as ends in themselves, they immediately become a hindrance to true religious experience.

The same is true of the law of God, the Decalogue. Formal compliance with its precepts, in the endeavor to earn salvation thereby, is futile. Only when obedience follows as the natural result of love for God and one’s fellow men is it of any value in

God's sight (see on Matt. 19:16–30). In the Sermon on the Mount our Lord stressed the principle that obedience to the "letter" of the law without the "spirit" of obedience falls short of meeting His standard of righteousness (see on Matt. 5:17–22). Contrary to certain modern exponents of Scripture, the "spirit" of the law does not abolish its "letter." For instance, Jesus enjoined His followers, on the basis of the sixth commandment, not to be "angry" with their brethren (Matt. 5:22), but He did not thereby give a man license to violate the letter of the commandment by taking his brother's life. The "spirit" of the sixth commandment obviously does not replace its "letter" and tends to "magnify" it (see on Isa. 42:21); The same may be said of each precept of the Decalogue, including the fourth commandment (see on Isa. 58:13; Mark 2:28).

The letter killeth. The "letter" was good, but it had no power to rescue the sinner from the sentence of death. In fact, it condemned him to death. As originally given by God, the law was designed to promote life (Rom. 7:10, 11), and thus it is said to be "holy, and just, and good" (v. 12). But life came with obedience, and death with disobedience. The law thus put the sinner to death, for the "soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Eze. 18:4, 20). "The wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23), but the gospel was designed to forgive him, and give him life (ch. 8:1–3). The law sentences the commandment breaker to death, but the gospel redeems him and makes him live again. (Ps. 51).

Giveth life. Literally, "makes alive." The ministry of the "spirit" imparts supernatural power. The sentence of death imposed by the law is superseded by the gift of life in Christ (1 John 5:11, 12). When brought to the conscience of a converted man, the standard of God's righteousness becomes the occasion of obedience and life. But when the law of God is brought to the conscience of the unregenerate man, it condemns him to death.

7. Ministration of death. That is, the Jewish religious system, which had become so perverted that it was lifeless and could not impart life to those who practiced it. In v. 9 Paul calls it "the ministration of condemnation." Verses 7–18 are based on the experience of Moses recorded in Ex. 34:29–35. Paul here sets forth the superior glory of the ministration of the "spirit," his purpose being to confute his opponents at Corinth, the Judaizers (see on 2 Cor. 11:22), whose ministry was of the "letter" and not of the "spirit."

Written and engraven. Literally, "engraved in writing," with emphasis on the idea that the writing was intended to remain and thus have permanent force. This is an obvious reference to the two tables of stone on which the Ten Commandments were written (Ex. 31:18). Compare the words of Christ in Matt. 4:4, 7, 10, "It is written," meaning, "It stands written." Paul here refers to the second inscription of the law on tables of stone (Ex. 34:1–7, 28–35).

Face of Moses. See on Ex. 34:29–35.

Glory. See on Rom. 3:23. In 2 Cor. 3:7–18 the glory that remains is contrasted with the glory that fades away, the more glorious with the less glorious, the new with the old. In both, the "glory" is the glory of the presence of Christ. In the new there is a full revelation of God's glory in the actual person and presence of Christ, who came to this world to be seen of men (see on John 1:14), which glory abides forever (see Heb. 7). In the Mosaic ministration Christ was seen only in types provided for by the ceremonial law, but the glory was nevertheless the reflected glory of Christ. The Redeemer was hidden behind a veil of types, symbols, rites, and ceremonies, but this veil was done away at the coming of the great Antitype (see Heb. 10:19, 20).

Done away. Some superficial readers have concluded from this statement that the law of God “was to be done away.” The verse clearly states, however, that it was the passing “glory” reflected in the face of Moses that “was to be done away.” That “glory” faded in a few hours, or days, at most, but the law of God, “written and engraven in stones,” remained in effect. It was the ministry of Moses and the Jewish system that was to pass away, not the law of God (see on Matt. 5:17, 18). The glory was not upon the tables of stone, and did not fade from them.

The fleeting glory on the face of Moses was the result of his fellowship with God on Sinai. It testified to those who saw it that Moses had been in the divine presence, and bore silent witness to his commission as God’s representative, and the obligation of the people to abide by its precepts. That glory was given to attest the divine source and thus the binding force of the law.

As Moses’ face reflected the glory of God, so the ceremonial law and the services of the earthly sanctuary reflected the presence of Christ. God intended that men in OT times should apprehend and experience the saving presence of Christ in the reflected glory of the typical system. But with the coming of Christ men were privileged to behold the glory of the Antitype (see on John 1:14), and no longer needed the lesser, reflected glory that attended the type. In OT times sinners found salvation by faith in Christ, the One who was to come, as surely as they have in Christian times.

It is for this reason that Paul speaks of the administration of these rites and ceremonies as a “ministration of death.” Jews who failed to see Christ in the sacrificial system would die in their sins. In and of itself that system never saved anyone from reaping the wages of sin—death. And since most Jews of Paul’s time, including the Judaizers now troubling the church at Corinth, considered those sacrifices essential to salvation, Paul appropriately characterized the entire system as a “ministration of death.” It was lifeless. Jew and Gentile alike must find life in Christ, for in Him alone is there salvation (Acts 4:12). Christ was the Saviour of Israel throughout OT times as truly as He is our Saviour today (see EGW Supplementary Material on Acts 15:11).

The failure of the Jewish nation to see and believe in Christ as typified by the ceremonial system marks the entire course of Hebrew history, from Sinai to Christ. Thus, the expression “ministration of death” appropriately characterizes the whole period of the Jewish economy, though there were, of course, many notable exceptions. Israel’s blindness finally led them to reject Jesus as the Messiah and to crucify their Redeemer. Paul declares that with the coming of the greater glory revealed in Christ and the consequent fading of the reflected glory of the typical system, there can be no further excuse for remaining under such a system. The coming of Christ and the fullness of the Holy Spirit amply provided a ministration that could impart life.

8. Ministration of the spirit. The ministry of salvation, which imparts life, is designated as (1) “the ministry of reconciliation” (ch. 5:18), that is, a ministry by which men are reconciled to God; (2) “the ministration of the spirit” (ch. 3:8); (3) “the ministry of the word” (Acts 6:4); and (4) “the ministration of righteousness” (2 Cor. 3:9), that is, a ministry by which men may learn how to become righteous (see on Rom. 8:3, 4). The argument is from the lesser to the greater. This passage presents a series of contrasts, the letter and the spirit, the glory that fades and the glory that remains, condemnation and righteousness, Moses and Christ. The latter, in each instance, is infinitely superior to the former (see Heb. 3:1–6).

9. Ministration of condemnation. That is, the “ministration of death” (see on v. 7). The “ministration of righteousness” surpassed the “ministration of condemnation” in glory to the extent that the blood of Jesus Christ surpassed that of bulls and goats as a means of atoning for sin. The difference between the two was infinite.

10. No glory. Not in the absolute, but in a comparative sense. The glory of the ministry centering in the sacrificial system was great, but when compared with that of Christ it appeared as nothing. The former ministry has thus lost its glory. It is completely eclipsed. The brilliance of the moon and the stars fades away when the sun shines forth. So it is with Christ, the Sun of Righteousness. The transcendent glory of Christ’s incarnation, life, sufferings, death, and resurrection, and of His revelation of the love and character of God—His holiness, justice, goodness, and mercy—makes the sacrificial system, well adapted as it was for its time, wholly inadequate.

11. Done away. Paul sees the fading of the glory from Moses’ face as an illustration of the passing of the Mosaic system, the passing of the “ministration of death.” The apostolic ministry brings that of Moses to an end because it has served its purpose. A pattern loses its usefulness when the garment for which it prepared the way has been completed. The Judaizers kept their eyes focused on the “patterns of things in the heavens” after Christ had returned to heaven to administer the “heavenly things themselves” (Heb. 9:23). Paul sought to turn men’s attention from the “letter” of an administration that was powerless to impart life, to the “spirit” of one that could do so. The Jewish system had become not only useless as a guide to salvation, but actually dangerous, in that it now tended to turn men’s attention away from Christ, though its original purpose was to point men to Him.

In addition to the fact that the Jewish system had now become obsolete, it was also true that even while the system retained validity the Jews had largely perverted God’s original plan and purpose for it. This now made the system doubly obsolete and objectionable (cf. Matt. 23:38; DA 577). Now, with the coming of Christ, no excuse whatsoever remained for perpetuating the old ministration, as Paul’s Judaizing opponents sought to do. Compare Rom. 9:30–33.

Much more. As the glory of the sun makes the stars disappear, so the ministry of the “spirit” surpasses and replaces that of the “letter.”

12. Seeing then. In vs. 7–11 Paul has contrasted the Mosaic and apostolic ministries. Now he presents the differing results of the two kinds of ministration, as seen in the Jews (vs. 13–16) and in the Christians (vs. 17, 18). The Jews remained blind and hard of heart. For Christians the ministry of the “spirit” provided liberty and a transformation of character.

Such hope. That is, in the surpassing glory and efficacy of the ministration of the “spirit” (cf. Titus 2:13).

Plainness. Literally, “openness,” “frankness,” “boldness.” The same Greek word is translated “boldness” in Acts 4:13, and often so elsewhere. The word embraces the ideas of frankness, candor, and courage. The Jews had been afraid to look at the divine radiance on the face of Moses, and had trembled at the manifestation of divine glory on Sinai. Moses was indeed God’s spokesman, but it was necessary to veil the divine glory on his face, which attested his ministry. On the contrary, there was nothing about Paul’s more glorious ministry that needed to be concealed. He could proclaim the truths of the gospel without reservation.

13. Not as Moses. See Ex. 34:29–35. Paul uses the incident of the veil to illustrate Israel’s spiritual blindness (2 Cor. 3:14–16). According to Paul the fading glory represented the types and ceremonies that were to end with the coming of the great Anti-type, the Lord Jesus Christ. Because of the “veil,” Paul says, the Israelites were unable to see the fading away of that transitory glory or to understand its meaning. They fondly believed that the types and ceremonies were to be permanent. They looked upon them as an end in themselves. They did not see that the typical system was temporary and provisional in nature, and foreshadowed the glory of Christ, who was to come.

To be sure, Moses did not deliberately conceal the truth and seek to deceive the Israelites. He prophesied concerning the Messiah and looked forward to the glorious period of His coming (see Deut. 18:15). The veil symbolized the unbelief of the Jews (see Heb. 3:18, 19; 4:1, 2; cf. PP 329, 330) and their refusal to perceive Christ in the sacrificial ministration.

14. Blinded. Gr. *pōroō*, “to grow calous,” “to become dull,” “to lose the faculty of understanding.” *Pōroō* is translated “hardened” in Mark 6:52; 8:17. The cause of this spiritual condition was persistent unbelief.

Until this day. Paul had been commissioned a minister of the new covenant, but his ministry for the Jews of his day was no more effective than that of Moses had been in his time. Was this because Paul had ministered to them the “letter” only? No! It was because the same “veil” was still upon their hearts and minds. The solution was for them to remove the “veil,” not for Paul to change his ministry of the “spirit” to one of the “letter,” as his critics demanded.

The same veil. That is, the same spiritual incapacity for recognizing the great spiritual truths and the spiritual objective of the Mosaic administration. Some 1,500 years after Sinai the Jews were still as dull of understanding as they had been then. The pattern of Jewish unbelief in Paul’s day was identical with that of Moses’ day.

Old testament. Certainly not what we know as the OT, for there was yet no NT. For the common NT designation for the OT see on Luke 24:44. Paul probably refers either to the Pentateuch, or to that portion of it in which the terms of the covenant arrangement are stated. Instead of being over Moses’ face, the veil is now over the book he wrote. Regardless of the spoken or written word of Moses, the minds and hearts of the people were still blinded. The Jews did not do away with the law. They read it regularly and, presumably, honored Moses. But in reality they did not believe him, for had they done so they would also have believed Christ (John 5:46, 47). For them, the glory of Moses consisted in the “letter” of the law and in the outward forms and ceremonies prescribed therein. The nature and work of the Messiah remained a mystery to them.

Done away in Christ. Only the discovery of Christ in the prophecies of the OT, and in the forms and ceremonies prescribed by it, would ever serve to lift the “veil” from the reading of those passages of Scripture. But the Jews refused to recognize Christ as the Messiah, and the veil therefore remained unlifted.

15. Even unto this day. Some 1,500 years after the time of Moses and about 30 years after the death of Christ.

When Moses is read. The first five books of the Bible were written by Moses, and came to be known as “the law of Moses.” These were regularly read in the synagogues (Acts 15:5, 21; see Vol. V, pp. 96, 97).

Upon their heart. Not so much upon the intellect as upon the will. They could have believed, but they refused to do so (see on Hosea 4:6). Throughout their history as a nation the Jews were willfully blind. They saw in what Moses wrote only that which they were willing to believe (see Vol. IV, p. 33). They were fully persuaded of the incomparable excellence of the “letter” of the Mosaic law, but they closed their eyes to its “spirit.” The sanctuary services and sacrifices pointed to the Lamb of God and to His mediatorial work. Such psalms as the 22d, 24th, and the 110th pointed to One greater than David. The prophecies of Isaiah should have led them to understand that the Messiah must suffer before he reigns as King. They did indeed look for the Messiah, but as a Saviour from foreign enemies, not from sin (see on Luke 4:19). The same veil of willful unbelief often conceals truth from men today. We need to approach the Scriptures with open minds, ready to relinquish preconceived opinions and to acknowledge and accept the truth, whatever it may be.

16. When it. The Greek may also be translated, “when he.” “It” would refer to the “heart” of v. 15, and “he” to the individual Jew who listened to the reading of the law of Moses in the synagogue. The obstacle to spiritual vision lies with the individual himself, not with God. Paul is not teaching that the whole nation of Israel is to be saved en masse (see Rom. 9:6–8; see on ch. 11:26).

Shall turn. Gr. *epistrephō*, “to turn about,” “to return,” here, as commonly in the NT (see Matt. 13:15; Luke 22:32; Acts 3:19; etc.), “to be converted.” When truly converted, men will discern that both OT and NT bear witness to Christ (Luke 24:27; John 5:39; 15:26, 27; 16:13, 14). But like the unbelieving Jews of NT times, some modern Christians, their understanding veiled, see no more in the OT than a system of rites and ceremonies.

The veil. As Moses removed the veil when he went again into the presence of Jehovah (Ex. 34:34), spiritual blindness and unbelief will be removed from the minds and hearts of those who are truly converted. When the Jew, led by the Spirit, came to believe on Christ, the veil, which had obscured his vision of the everlasting covenant, and which had thus perverted his being, was removed. He was then able to see the true significance of the Jewish economy and to realize that Christ, in His own person and work, constituted the very heart of the sacrificial system and of the entire law of Moses.

Only as men find Christ in the Scriptures, whether OT or NT, are they reading its message aright. Only when men commit themselves in full obedience to the will of God are they prepared to understand His Word and interpret it correctly (see on Matt. 7:21–27).

17. That Spirit. Literally, “the Spirit.” Paul does not here identify the second person of the Godhead with the third but refers to their unity of purpose and operation. That such identity is not meant is evident from the next clause, “the Spirit of the Lord.” In the NT the Holy Spirit is designated both as the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ (Rom. 8:9). Paul here means that: (1) The indwelling of Christ is accomplished by, and is equivalent to, the indwelling of the Spirit (John 14:16–20; cf. Gal. 2:20). (2) The Spirit ministers the wisdom, truth, and righteousness of Christ (John 16:10–14). (3) The Spirit acts as Christ’s agent in carrying forward the work of redemption and in making it vital and effective (John 7:37–39). (4) The fellowship of Christ is the fellowship of the Spirit (John 14:17, 18).

Where the Spirit. The ministration of the Spirit means freedom from the ministration of the letter, which, by itself alone, means bondage. To “walk in the Spirit” is to enjoy Christian liberty (see Gal. 5:13–16; cf. John 6:63). In and of itself the ministration of the “letter” engraved on tables of stone has no power whatever to convert sinners and to give liberty. It is the Son who alone can make men “free indeed” (John 8:36).

The liberty of the Spirit is that of a new life which can always be allowed free and natural expression for the simple reason that when a man is born again his supreme desire is that the will of God be made effective in him. God’s law written upon the heart (see on 2 Cor. 3:3) frees him from all forms of external compulsion. He chooses to do right, not because the “letter” of the law forbids him to do wrong, but because the “spirit” of the law, engraved in his heart, leads him to choose the right. The indwelling Spirit so controls his will and affections that he desires what is right, and is free to follow the truth as it is in Jesus. He consents that the law is good, and delights “in the law of God after the inward man” (Rom. 7:22; cf. Ps. 1:2).

Liberty in Christ does not mean license to do as one pleases, unless one pleases to obey Christ in all things. There must be control. The less of it there is within, the more of it must be imposed from without. The man who is renewed in Christ Jesus can be safely trusted with full liberty, because he will not abuse it by making it subserve selfish objectives.

18. With open face. Unlike the Israelite, who still has a veil upon his mind and heart that prevents him from seeing the glory of the Lord, the Christian is privileged to behold the fullness of that glory. At Sinai Moses alone received the revelation from God with unveiled face. Now all may draw nigh to God as effectively as Moses did and hold intimate communion with Him (cf. Heb. 4:16).

Beholding as in a glass. Gr. *katoptrizō*, “to reflect,” or “to behold a reflection.” Some translators and commentators favor the first definition here, others the second. The context favors the second, for to be “changed” into the likeness of Christ is logically the result of “beholding” Him, not of reflecting Him. It is also true that our lives are as mirrors, receiving light from Christ and reflecting it to others. As Moses’ face reflected the glory of God at Sinai, so our lives are ever to reflect the glory of the Lord as it shines forth to a lost world in the face of the Saviour.

Are changed. Literally, “are being changed.” The plan of redemption aims to restore the image of God in man (Rom. 8:29; 1 John 3:2), a transformation that comes about by contemplating Christ (Rom. 12:2; Gal. 4:19). The contemplation of the image of Christ acts upon the moral and spiritual nature as the presence of God did upon the face of Moses. The humblest Christian who constantly looks to Christ as his Redeemer will reflect in his own life something of the glory of Christ. If he faithfully continues to do so, he will go on “from glory to glory” in his personal Christian experience (see 2 Peter 1:5–7).

From glory to glory. This transformation is progressive. It advances from one stage of glory to another. Our spiritual assimilation of Christ comes through His glory and results in a reflection of glory like unto His.

As by the Spirit of the Lord. Literally, “as from the Lord, [the] Spirit.” The spiritual transformation that proceeds from Christ takes place only through the operation of the Holy Spirit, who, having access to the heart, renews, hallows, and glorifies the nature and makes it over into the likeness of Christ’s perfect life.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

- 1–3AA 327
2 AH 32; CH 560; FE 200, 388, 391; MYP 348; 2T 344, 548, 615, 632, 705; 3T 31, 66; 4T 106, 376, 459, 615; 5T 236, 348, 386; 6T 81, 251
2, 3 SC 115
3 GC 262
5 Ev 383; 2T 550; 6T 319, 414
5, 6 AA 328
6 SL 63
7–11PP 330, 367
13, 14 AA 44; PP 330; SR 303
13–186T 146
15, 16 EW 213
17 AA 460
18 AA 307, 545, 559; CH 528; COL 355; CT 251; CW 122; DA 83, 441; Ed 282; Ev 135; FE 480; GC 478; GW 255, 274; MB 85; MH 425, 492, 503; ML 24, 46, 54, 105, 196; MYP 104, 114; SC 72; SL 8; TM 121, 221, 389; 4T 616; 5T 105, 201, 306, 744; 6T 317; 7T 46; 8T 86, 289, 318

CHAPTER 4

- 1 *He declareth how he hath used all sincerity and faithful diligence in preaching the gospel, 7 and how the troubles and persecutions which he daily endured for the same did redound to the praise of God's power, 12 to the benefit of the church, 16 and to the apostle's own eternal glory.*

1. This ministry. That is, the ministry of the “new testament,” by which men are freed from bondage to the “letter” of the law (see on ch. 3:6, 17), and have its principles engraved on the heart (v. 3). This ministry of the “spirit” (v. 6), of “righteousness” by faith (v. 9), of the “new testament” (v. 6), of true “liberty” (v. 17), restores the believer to the likeness of Christ. This glorious ministry ever sustains its adherents and its ambassadors through every trial and every suffering, and even these redound to the glory of God.

Faint. Gr. *egkakeō*, “to be weary,” “to lose courage,” “to lose heart.” Paul had supreme confidence in the integrity and value of his message, and God had greatly blessed his ministry. He was altogether unworthy. He had been a persecutor and a blasphemer. He considered himself the “chief” of all sinners (1 Tim. 1:15). But he had “received mercy.” He owed his ordination as a minister of the gospel entirely to the grace of God (1 Cor. 7:25; 15:9, 10; Gal. 1:15, 16; 1 Tim. 1:12–16). Nothing subdues pride, conceit, and self-confidence like an honest retrospect of one’s own life. Paul’s conversion and commission to the gospel ministry were due to divine favor (1 Tim. 1:13, 14).

2. Have renounced. Literally, “have renounced [once for all].” At conversion Paul had renounced every practice that was inconsistent with his new-found faith, and upon receiving his commission as a gospel minister he had renounced questionable methods such as his opponents felt free to use.

Dishonesty. Gr. *aischunē*, “shameful [things].” The Christian ministry demands transparency of life and character. The moment men begin to suspect that there are things in a leader’s life that will not bear scrutiny, his work is over. The first requirement of a

true minister is that he renounce completely all things that might bring shame to the cause of God. True religion is a way of light and never of darkness (see Rom. 13:12; 1 Cor. 4:5; Eph. 5:8; cf. 1 John 1:5), for it is concerned, not only with every act, but even more, with the motive that prompts the act.

Not walking in craftiness. That is, not practicing deception. Paul aspired to be what he appeared to be (cf. Luke 20:23). His opponents would resort to any deception in order to secure their objectives.

Deceitfully. Paul proclaimed the whole truth without adulterating it. Adulteration of the Word of God consists of preaching personal opinions as if they had the sanction of Scripture, of removing texts from their context, of substituting human traditions for a “Thus saith the Lord,” of explaining away the plain meaning of Scripture in order to excuse sin, of interpreting its literal teachings in a mystical or symbolic way so as to vitiate their force, or of presenting an admixture of error with truth (see 2 Cor. 11:3; 12:16; Eph. 4:14; 1 Thess. 2:3, 4).

Manifestation. In one form or another the word “manifest” appears repeatedly in this epistle (chs. 2:14; 3:3; 4:10; 5:11; 11:6; etc.). It stands for the opposite of concealment and craftiness. All that truth requires is a simple, clear statement. Nothing in the minister or the professed Christian must be allowed to obscure this open manifestation.

Commending ourselves. Opponents at Corinth have branded Paul a false apostle (see on ch. 3:1). He now proceeds to defend his apostleship by setting forth certain aspects of his life and ministry that should commend him to them as a genuine apostle.

Conscience. For the importance Paul attached to a clear conscience see on Acts 23:1. Paul credits every man with the capacity for moral judgment and for an inborn knowledge of the moral law (see Rom. 2:13–15). Paul’s “manifestation” of the truth appealed not only to men’s intellect, but also to their conscience (cf. John 8:9; Rom. 2:15).

In the sight of God. God knows the integrity of Paul’s heart, and Paul, as it were, calls God to testify to the truth of what he now writes.

3. *Be hid.* Or, “be veiled,” or “remains veiled.” Paul here alludes to the “vail” of ch. 3 (see vs. 13–16). In Paul’s day the situation was the same as it had been in the days of Moses—for many, truth still remained hidden. This situation was not due to lack of clearness in the gospel itself, but to the attitude of the minds and hearts to which it was addressed.

Are lost. Literally, “are being lost.” Paul is thinking, no doubt, of the Corinthian minority that persists in following the false apostles among them. They may yet repent, but so long as the gospel remains veiled to them, they remain in a lost condition. For them, salvation will be possible when the “vail” is removed (see Matt. 18:11; Luke 15:4, 6, 24, 31, 32; 19:10).

Man cannot provide himself with light, but he can make darkness for himself by closing his eyes to the light. However bright the sun, its beams are veiled to the blind. Paul speaks of those who refused the light of the gospel because of inward darkness for which they themselves were responsible (see on Hosea 4:6). Certain conditions may veil the saving power of the gospel. In the Corinthian church, for instance, party spirit, rivalry, contention, immorality, pride, and selfishness in the lives of some hid the gospel from them. The open gospel must be met by open minds and hearts (John 8:47; 1 John 4:6).

Indifference to spiritual things and preoccupation with nonspiritual things also draw the veil (see Luke 21:34; see on Matt. 6:24–34). Legitimate earthly occupations may swallow up a man until he has neither time nor the desire for heavenly light. Men do not reject the truth because of lack of evidence. They may, indeed, believe a thousand things on the basis of far less evidence. They reject the truth because it condemns them; it reproves their sins and disturbs their conscience.

4. God of this world. That is, Satan. Paul here explains why the glorious gospel is veiled to many men. Satan is a personal being (see on Matt. 4:1), and it is imperative that we recognize him when he comes in any form or through any medium. The title “god of this world” alludes to Satan’s attempt to usurp God’s sovereignty over this world. The devil claims to be the god of this world (Matt. 4:8, 9; 1 John 5:19). He has been the invisible ruler of many of the great kingdoms and empires of earth. He is called “the god of this world” because it is his purpose to secure complete control of this world and its inhabitants. He is “the god of this world” because the world is largely under his control. He rules in the hearts of most of its inhabitants (cf. Eph. 2:1, 2). The world obeys his dictates, yields to his temptations, takes part in his wicked ways and abominations. He is the author and instigator of all sin, and the very embodiment of it. Willful sinners are said to be given over to Satan (1 Cor. 5:5; cf. 1 Tim. 1:20). He is the “god of this world” because of his control, even though limited, of the forces of nature, the elements of earth, sea, and sky.

To speak of Satan as “god of this world” does not mean that God has abdicated sovereignty over the world. Satan’s power and control are strictly limited. He exercises what power he has only by permission of an all-wise God, and only so long as may be necessary for the effective and eternal destruction of sin (1 Cor. 15:24–28; Rev. 12:12).

Minds. Gr. *noēmata*, “perceptive faculties.” The battle between Christ and Satan is a battle for the minds of men (Rom. 7:23, 25; 12:2; 2 Cor. 3:14; 11:3; Phil. 2:5; 4:7, 8). Satan’s principal work is to blind or darken men’s minds. He does this by keeping them from the study of God’s Word, by deranging the powers of the mind through excesses of body and soul, by wholly occupying the mind with things of this life, and by appealing to pride and self-exaltation.

Believe not. The responsibility for spiritual blindness rests not only with Satan but also with those who choose to “believe not.” They have been brought to the light of God’s truth, yet their mental and spiritual reactions are blind and negative. The great fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith appear to them to have no value. But they themselves are responsible, for they have knowingly turned away from the truth. They have eyes but see not (Isa. 6:9; Matt. 13:14, 15; John 12:40; Rom. 11:8–10). They see no beauty in the Lord’s Servant, that they should desire Him (Isa. 53:2).

Light. Gr. *phōtismos*, “enlightenment,” “illumination,” from a verb meaning “to give light,” “to illuminate.” Compare *phōs*, the usual word for “light” (see on John 1:7, 9).

Phōtismos is here used of the gospel, which will enlighten every sincere and open mind. Many, nevertheless, remain blind, even when the full light of the gospel shines into their darkened minds. They are like men in a dark room who deliberately keep out the light. They keep the light of the gospel from rising and ascending to the zenith of their lives (see Prov. 4:18).

The issue is one between light and darkness. The most that Satan can do is to blind the minds of men. He cannot darken the light of the gospel; but he can envelop human minds in darkness. He can cause a veil to cover their eyes, even though the gospel enlightens others all around them.

Satan's kingdom is the kingdom of darkness (see Isa. 60:2; Matt. 8:12; Luke 22:53; 2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6; Rev. 16:10), and it is for this reason that the devil hates the light of the gospel. He is willing that the light of any substitute for the gospel should shine—the light of knowledge, of culture, of morality, of education, of wealth, and of human wisdom. But his whole effort is turned against the spread of the gospel light, which alone can save men (Acts 4:12). The gospel is the only means by which Satan's diabolical schemes and deceptions can be exposed, and by which men can see the way from darkness to light. See on John 1:4, 5, 9, 14.

Image. Gr. *eikōn*, “image,” “figure,” “likeness.” This word is used in the LXX of Gen. 1:26, and also in 1 Cor. 11:7; Col. 1:15; 3:10; Heb. 10:1. Christ is the express image of the Father, in that the character, attributes, and perfection of both are the same. God the Father is like Jesus (John 12:45; 14:9; Phil. 2:6). Adam and Eve were originally made in that image, and it is the objective of the plan of salvation to restore that image in mankind.

Should shine. Paul here refers to the penetration of the human soul by the light of the saving knowledge of the gospel.

5. We preach. Paul had been charged with being self-centered in his preaching, but he flatly repudiates the charge. Men preach themselves when they are motivated by self-interest, when they seek the applause of men, when they are ambitious to display their own talents, when they proclaim their own opinions and the traditions and teachings of men in preference for, and in contradiction to, the Word of God, and when they are motivated to preach for gain, for a livelihood, or for prestige and popularity.

Christ Jesus the Lord. See on Matt. 1:1; John 1:38. To preach Christ means to preach the everlasting gospel.

Servants. Gr. *douloi*, “slaves,” “bond servants.” Elsewhere, Paul speaks of himself as a servant of Christ (Rom. 1:1; Phil. 1:1; cf. Matt. 20:28), and as such he has no right to lord it over God's heritage.

6. Commanded the light. God spoke the light into existence by a single command (see on Gen. 1:3; Ps. 33:6, 9). His first recorded words brought forth light where there had been only darkness (Gen. 1:2). Not only did God create natural light, He sent His Son to be “the light of the world” (John 8:12). All physical, intellectual, moral, and spiritual light have their origin in the Father of light (James 1:17). He clothed Himself “with light as with a garment” (Ps. 104:2). By very nature God is light (James 1:17; cf. John 1:4, 5). See on John 1:4, 5, 9, 14.

Shined. Gr. *lampō*, “to shine.” The very One who created the sun to illuminate the primeval darkness of this world also provides the light of truth to enlighten benighted minds (Ps. 119:105). As the spoken word of God brought light to a dark world, the living Word, as set forth in the written Word, commands the light of heaven to shine into darkened souls. It is beyond the power, skill, and wisdom of man to produce such light.

The form of the verb in Greek suggests that Paul may refer to a particular experience in the past—his own conversion. Paul then beheld Christ in His glorified form, and light

from the face of Christ shone upon him. Later, the scales fell from his eyes and from his mind (Acts 9:3–18). For the first time Christ appeared to him as He truly was, Saviour and Lord, and he became a transformed man. The darkness of his own soul and mind was dispelled (Acts 9:17, 18; 26:16–18).

To give the light. According to the Greek construction of this passage, the purpose of God's shining into men's hearts is to give light, the purpose of the light is to acquaint them with the knowledge of the divine glory, and the purpose of the knowledge of the divine glory is to save them.

In the face. The same glory that had been reflected on the face of Moses had more recently been seen on the face of Christ (see on Matt. 17:2; Luke 2:48; John 1:14; 2 Peter 1:17, 18). Christ is the complete revelation of His Father's glory, the incarnation of every divine excellence. All other revelations have either been partial or imperfect. In the face of Jesus Christ men may see the whole, pure, perfect light of God.

Paul acknowledged God's glory in creation and in the law, but now he perceived the perfect exhibition of divine glory in the face and person of Jesus Christ. This is what won his heart and lifelong devotion. It is only in and through Jesus Christ that man becomes a partaker of the divine nature, and thus of the divine glory.

7. This treasure. That is, "the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (v. 6). In vs. 7–18 Paul dwells on the way in which this knowledge has given him the power to endure, as a "slave" of God, the almost insuperable difficulties that have confronted him in his ministry. Except for this knowledge and power the weak human vessel would have collapsed (see v. 1).

Earthen vessels. Gr. *ostrakinoi*, originally, hollow receptacles made of shell or of baked clay. Such utensils were frail and fragile, unimposing, of brief usefulness, and of little value. Such is the human vessel in contrast with the eternal treasure of God. Yet it is God's plan to make this weak vessel the recipient and retainer of the greatest of treasures. The minister and the believer are declared to be but earthen jars for the supreme purpose of containing God's great treasure. Perhaps Paul is thinking of the ancient practice of storing treasure in great earthen jars for safekeeping.

Man is but the casket that contains the jewel of Christ's righteousness, which is imputed and imparted to every believer (see on Matt. 13:45, 46). By himself, man is in a state of abject poverty. He remains in that state until he is enriched by this heavenly treasure. All who are redeemed by Christ have this treasure, some more than others, according to their own reception of it by faith. To those crossing the desert, water is of supreme value. To those living in darkness, light is of supreme value. To those facing death, life is of supreme value. To mortal man, the gospel treasure is all of these—living water, the light of the world, eternal life.

Of God. Men would be inclined to use valuable containers for storing their treasures. But in the working out of His plan God often chooses the humblest of men, lest they take credit to themselves (1 Cor. 1:28, 29). It is not for man's good that he should receive credit for saving himself or his fellow men. There is no greater hindrance to the life of the minister or the believer than pride. It is not the containers, but their contents, that are important; thus with the minister and his message. God might have commissioned angels to do the work He has committed to frail men, but in doing so He works in such a way as to make it evident that the work of redemption is of God and not of man. The vessel or instrument has no value of itself (cf. 2 Tim. 2:19, 20); His presence and power alone

determine its value. The spread of the gospel is always hindered where men obscure the work of God by emphasis upon human wisdom, ability, or eloquence.

8. *Troubled on every side.* Verses 8–10 contain four pairs of contrasts. On the one side they illustrate the frailty of the earthen vessel, and on the other the excellency of the power of God despite this frailty. See on ch. 1:4. Every Christian, and particularly the Christian minister, finds himself in the midst of a great battle, the age-long warfare between Christ and Satan (Eph. 6:10–17; Rev. 12:7–12, 17). Consequently, he cannot escape trial and tribulation (John 16:33; Acts 14:22; Rev. 7:14). Yet the success that attends the efforts of the frail human instrument in the midst of tribulation and distress demonstrates the presence of divine power (Rom. 8:35–39). Therefore no man may “glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Gal. 6:14). The clearest and most effective revelation of Christ is made in and through men and women who triumph by God’s grace.

Yet not distressed. The buoyancy of Paul’s indomitable spirit has inspired countless thousands of ambassadors for Christ to be loyal, brave, and courageous in the midst of uncertainty, disappointment, difficulty, persecution, and death. Circumstances do not determine the climate of the Christian soul. He endures because he sees his invisible Lord, and is sustained by the light of divine grace (see Heb. 11:27).

Perplexed. Gr. *aporeō*, “to be in doubt.” Paul had often found himself in situations where, from a human point of view, there was no way out. But he had learned, under such circumstances, to trust God and wait.

In despair. Gr. *exaporeō*, “to be in despair,” “to be utterly at a loss [to know what to do].” However forbidding the circumstances, Paul had learned by experience to trust God for a solution.

9. *Persecuted.* See on Matt. 5:10–12; 10:17–23; John 15:20. Each succeeding contrast reveals more fully the intensity of the suffering and personal peril. Paul speaks of being surrounded, pursued, caught, and thrown down by hostile forces. No way of escape seemed to remain, and death appeared to be inevitable.

Not forsaken. Through all his trials Paul and his fellow laborers experienced the fulfillment of Christ’s promise to be with them even to the point of death, and to provide a way of escape (see 1 Cor. 10:13; 2 Thess. 1:4; Heb. 2:18; 13:5). For the Christian in times of trial and persecution, certain divine truths are evident. However great the trials encountered, they are not beyond endurance (Deut. 33:25; Ps. 46:1). No Christian need be discouraged. Even when stripped of everything of earthly value his greatest treasure remains secure—beyond the reach of men and demons (2 Cor. 4:16; cf. Ps. 23:3). Rightly endured, all sufferings and trials that beset the life of the Christian serve only to bring him into closer fellowship with Christ in His sufferings (Phil. 3:10). Paul, perhaps, suffered more for Christ’s sake than any other Christian has been called upon to suffer. If so, Paul understood better than others what it meant to suffer with Jesus. Of all the NT writers, no other writes so much about the cross and about dying with Christ. With Paul, even persecution, trial, sacrifice, and life itself became experiences to glory in, because of the closer fellowship they brought with Christ in His sufferings.

Christ’s followers are to attain perfection through sufferings. Christ’s sufferings provided the dark background, as it were, against which His perfection of character shone forth with brighter luster (Heb. 2:10). His whole life was an experience of dying to self. Nothing tended to reveal more clearly His own love, and that of His Father, for sinners.

Similarly, for the Christian the trials, sufferings, and disappointments of the Christian life provide a background for the beauty of divine patience, the fragrance of a Christlike character, quiet submission to the will of God, firm trust in God's guidance. Thus the light of God is reflected upon the Christian's countenance. Christlike living will always be met by hostility and hatred from the followers of the prince of darkness. But it is not God's plan for the Christian to glory in suffering for its own sake, to court hostility and opposition so as to call attention to one's self-sacrifice and courage.

Cast down. Gr. *kataballō*, "to cast down [to the ground]," "to lay prostrate," as a man worsted in personal combat.

Not destroyed. Again and again it may have appeared that Paul was not only "down" but also "out." He admits that he has repeatedly been "cast down," but emphatically declares that he was never "destroyed."

10. Bearing about in the body. Here and there on Paul's body there were doubtless many scars that bore mute testimony to his sufferings for Christ.

The dying. Literally, "the death." For Paul this was a perpetual, daily dying, made real by his own constant exposure to death (Rom. 8:36; 1 Cor. 15:31; 2 Tim. 2:11). By this figure of speech Paul expresses his intimate fellowship with Christ in the sufferings he is continually called upon to endure. This constituted a vital testimony to the world concerning the power of the gospel. The Judaizers, who escaped persecution by preaching a lifeless, legal gospel, could offer no such evidence (see Gal. 6:12).

Life also of Jesus. As his scars testified of how close Paul had come to death, the fact that he still lived bore eloquent testimony to the power of Christ to deliver him from death. Also, Paul's life testified to the power of Christ to deliver men from sin and to transform them into His likeness (see Gal. 2:20).

11. We which live. Paul here amplifies and confirms what he has already stated in v. 10. For the ambassador of the gospel in those days, life and death were never far apart.

Alway. In the Greek this word is in the emphatic position. Paul lived intimately with death (see on 1 Cor. 15:29).

That the life. Though permanently handed over to death, the Christian missionary lives on, for Christ communicates His own life to that which is essentially mortal and corruptible (John 3:36; 14:6; 1 John 5:11, 12).

12. Death worketh. Paul now proceeds a step further in the contrast between life and death. While death is ever a present prospect for the gospel messenger, his objective is to bring life to those who are doomed to death because of sin. Here the term "life" is used in its higher spiritual sense. Although Paul's converts have experienced little or nothing of a life-and-death conflict comparable to his, nevertheless God has used him to minister life to them. From the lowly earthenware vessel, which was Paul's own life, proceeds the power of Christ to impart new life to the Corinthians.

13. Spirit of faith. The same faith as that expressed in the OT quotation, "I believed, and therefore have I spoken." Paul writes to the Corinthians with a profound sense of conviction and in earnest hope that they will heed his counsel.

It is written. The quotation is from Ps. 116:10. This psalm had evidently been his stay and comfort. Both Paul and David had proved, and thus were convinced of, the goodness and love of God. Both experienced trial, suffering, and deliverance, and both spoke with conviction. The nearness of death is no hindrance to the joyous expression of a living faith. The lives of all the great men and women of the Bible sparkle with this spirit of

triumph, this mood of buoyancy and radiance. They express joyful gratitude to God even in the midst of loss and persecution. The lives of all Christians who have experienced the love of God become joyfully expressive of that love and power. It is natural and easy for the tongue to express what the mind knows and the heart feels. The man who speaks what he does not believe is a hypocrite, whereas the man who believes what he will not speak is a coward.

14. Raised up the Lord. As Paul had already explained to the Corinthians at length (see 1 Cor. 15:13–23), the resurrection of Jesus stood as an absolute guarantee of the eventual resurrection of all the righteous.

Raise up us. It is Paul's confident hope of the resurrection that enables him to face death with calm and courage. He has already experienced a spiritual resurrection with Christ (Rom. 6:4), and this is his assurance of future triumph over death. He is sure of eternal life (Rom. 8:11; 1 Cor. 15:12–22; 2 Tim. 4:8).

By Jesus. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the reading "with Jesus." Paul refers to the resurrection of our Lord. He feels that his own resurrection is fully as certain. Jesus was raised up as the first of a redeemed race (Rev. 1:5), which would include all of the apostle's converts (1 Cor. 15:20). Furthermore, it is Christ who will bring the dead to life at the last day (John 5:25–29).

Present us. Perhaps the greatest moment of joy for those who triumph with Christ will be their presentation before God the Father. Paul anticipates with pride presenting his converts to Christ (ch. 11:2). The Scriptures refer several times to Christians being presented, or simply being present, before God. They appear before Christ at His judgment seat, for vindication and justification (Rom. 14:10–12; 2 Cor. 5:10). They will be presented before God at the marriage supper of the Lamb, as the bride of the Lamb (Rev. 19:7–9), and will dwell in His presence (ch. 21:3).

It may be noted in passing that the language of this verse seems to intimate that Paul expected to die before the return of his Lord, and to have a part in the resurrection.

15. All things. That is, all of the things Paul has suffered as an ambassador for Christ (vs. 7–12). Compare 1 Cor. 3:22, 23; 2 Tim. 2:10.

Abundant grace. That is, the grace of God that makes possible the salvation and redemption of the sinner (John 1:14, 16, 17; Acts 20:24, 32; Rom. 4:16; 5:20; etc.).

Thanksgiving of many. Paul foresees increasing glory being given to God, for the more people he turns to Christ through his ministry, the more there will be to ascribe glory to God's holy name (cf. ch. 9:11, 12). As the rain brings forth the fruits of the earth, so the abundant grace of God leads men to respond with thanksgiving (cf. Eph. 2:6–8). This response comes as the spontaneous acknowledgement of God's goodness, mercy, love, and power. The rendering of thanks and praise to God indicates the restoration of right relations between God and man, and this is the principal aim of the gospel.

16. For which cause. It is the prospect of future joy and glory that leads Paul to face with equanimity and patience the trials and tribulations attending his ministry (cf. Heb. 12:2). Ambassadors of the gospel endure the vicissitudes of this earth, for they live daily "as seeing him who is invisible" (Heb. 11:27). They are so confident of the glorious of the future that all the experiences of this life simply inspire added hope, joy, and faithfulness.

Outward man. That is, the body, the visible part of man, which decays under the wear and tear of life. The "inward man," on the other hand, denotes man's regenerate,

spiritual nature, which has been and is daily being renewed by the Spirit of God (Rom. 7:22; Eph. 3:16; 4:24; Col. 3:9, 10; 1 Peter 3:4). The process of renewal goes forward constantly and keeps him united to God. Paul makes constant reference to this renewal (Rom. 12:2; Eph. 4:23; Titus 3:5). One aspect of the Holy Spirit's work is the renewing of the believer with new supplies of spiritual life, energy, courage, and faith.

It is the daily renewing work of the Spirit in the life that brings about the complete restoration of the image of God in the soul of man. Thus, though the outward man may grow old and decay with the years, the inward man continues to grow in grace as long as life lasts. Paul could look calmly on the trials of life, on the flight of time, on the advance of age, on pain and suffering, on death itself. At the same time the Holy Spirit brought to him the assurance of immortality, a gift to be received on the resurrection day (2 Tim. 4:8).

Every Christian needs this daily renewal if his experience with God is not to become callous and formal. Spiritual renewal brings new light from God's Word, new experiences of grace, to share with others, new cleansing of heart and mind. In contrast, the unregenerate are usually anxious about those things that pertain to the outer man, what to eat, what to wear, and what to enjoy. See on Matt. 6:24–34.

17. Light affliction. This verse, with its paradoxical superlatives, is one of the most emphatic passages in all of Paul's writings. Here the apostle contrasts things of the present with things to come, things of time with those of eternity, affliction with glory.

For a moment. Gr. *parautika*, "momentary," "immediate." Compared with eternity, a moment is nothing. In view of eternity the Christian can well afford to endure any affliction for the brief space of a moment.

Few men have suffered as much for Christ as Paul did (ch. 11:23–30). Affliction pursued him everywhere he went, and every day. Considered by themselves, his afflictions were heavy indeed. But when compared with the joys of eternity and the glory of the hereafter, they were but momentary. Compare Rom. 8:18; Phil. 1:29; Heb. 2:9, 10.

Far more exceeding. Paul finds the words "eternal weight of glory" altogether inadequate to express the contrast he sees between the afflictions of time and the bliss of eternity. He adds still another superlative (cf. 1 John 3:1), a Greek idiom which he himself perhaps coined. Compare other superlative expressions used by Paul in Rom. 7:13; 1 Cor. 12:31; 2 Cor. 1:8; Gal. 1:13.

Affliction contributes to eternal glory by purifying, refining, and elevating the character (Ps. 94:12; Isa. 48:10; Heb. 12:5–11; James 1:2–4, 12; 1 Peter 1:7). It cultivates trust in, and dependence upon, God (Ps. 34:19; Isa. 63:9; Hosea 5:15; Jonah 2:2). Affliction exerts a subduing influence upon the heart and mind. It prostrates pride, subdues self, and is often the means of bringing the will of the believer into more complete harmony with the will of God. It tests the believer's faith and the genuineness of his profession as a Christian (Job 23:10; Ps. 66:10). It gives occasion for the exercise and perfection of faith. Faith is strengthened by exercise. It helps the believer to see things in their true perspective, and to put first things first. Affliction thus creates in Christians a suitableness for glory. When worldly objectives are removed through the discipline of suffering, the Christian finds it easier to set his affection on heavenly things (Col. 3:1, 2; 2 Tim. 4:5). It proves the bankruptcy of human wisdom by placing the believer in difficult positions, where his own helplessness and need of God becomes apparent (Ps. 107:39). It sanctifies human relationships. Nothing contributes more to

understanding our fellow men and having a feeling of kindness toward them than do sorrow, trial, and suffering.

Glory. Gr. *doxa* (see on John 1:14; Rom. 3:23).

18. While we look. Paul now explains how it is possible to see the afflictions of this life in their true perspective and to view them as of only momentary consequence. His gaze was fixed upon the glories of the eternal kingdom (cf. Heb. 12:2). Whatever gains the fixed attention of the mind determines how one will endure trial, whether with hope and patience or with dissatisfaction and bitterness. The former comes from contemplating the unseen things of the eternal world (Phil. 4:8), the spiritual realities of Christ; the latter from looking at such visible, transitory things as wealth, pleasure, and fame (see on Matt. 6:24–34). By fixing the mind upon the character and life of Christ we become like Him (cf. Heb. 11:10, 26, 27, 39, 40; 1 Peter 1:11).

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

- 1–6AA 329; FE 476
2 AA 331; 1T 337
3, 4 COL 106; 1T 338; 4T 586
4 CS 209; DA 19; Ev 610; GC 508; PK 682; PP 67, 442; 1T 476; 2T 397; 3T 250; 4T 44; 5T 742
5, 6 AA 208; 3T 31
5–7RC 61
5–102T 550
6 COL 149, 415, 421; DA 19, 282, 464; Ed 22, 28, 30; Ev 284; MH 464; PK 717; 8T 46, 256, 322
6–10AA 510; EW 28; SR 317
7 DA 297; TM 54, 154, 404; 4T 529
7–10AA 330
8, 9 AA 296
10 AA 251, 297; TM 388; 2T 343
11 MB 78
11–14AA 331
15 DA 288, 550
15–18AA 332
16–18RC 61
17 AA 560; CS 26; Ev 244; EW 17, 66; GC 351, 460; GW 18; MB 30; ML 338; PP 127, 476; SL 76; 1T 61, 126, 544, 657; 2T 38, 40, 44, 101, 275, 286, 358; 3T 481; 4T 526; 5T 260, 309, 351; 6T 156; 7T 29; 8T 131; 9T 49, 115; WM 317
17, 18 AA 363; EW 14, 28; 1T 706; 3T 98, 115; 5T 745; 8T 125
18 DA 412, 662; Ed 183, 296; MB 32; MH 37; PK 548; 4T 345; 7T 143

CHAPTER 5

1 *That in his assured hope of immortal glory, 9 and in expectance of it, and of the general judgment, he laboureth to keep a good conscience, 12 not that he may herein boast of himself, 14 but as one that, having received life from Christ endeavoureth to live as a new creature to Christ only, 18 and by his ministry of reconciliation to reconcile others also in Christ to God.*

1. For we know. That is, by faith, not by experience. The word “for” makes ch. 5 a continuation of the theme of ch. 4. Here Paul explains that the reason for the hope stated

in ch. 4 is the certainty of the resurrection at the second coming of Christ. The resurrection is the gateway to the eternal world, and hence the objective of Paul's earnest desire. Jesus expressed the same assurance regarding the truths He taught (cf. John 3:11; 4:22).

Our earthly house of this tabernacle. Literally, "our earthly tent-house." With reference to his "earthly house." With reference to his "earthly house" Paul also speaks of being "absent from the Lord" while he is "at home in the body" (v. 6), and of groaning until his "earthly house" is "dissolved" (v. 1) and he takes possession of his "house which is from heaven" (v. 2). To compare the human body with a tent was natural for a tentmaker (see Acts 18:3). Tent and body are alike in several respects: the materials of which both are made come from the earth, both are temporary in nature, and both are easily destroyed. A tent is but a transient dwelling place, and may be taken down and moved at any time. Literally, according to John 1:14, Christ "tented" among us when He assumed a human body at the time of His incarnation (see comment there). Peter similarly compares the human body to a tent, or "tabernacle" (see 2 Peter 1:13, 14).

We have. Paul's confidence in the blessed hope of the resurrection (1 Cor. 15:20) is so certain that he speaks of his future "house" as a present possession. His eyes are fixed on things that are, as yet, "not seen" (2 Cor. 4:18). His heavenly "house" is no less real to him than his earthly "house." The heroes of faith named in Hebrews 11 similarly accepted God's promises and acted upon them as though they were present realities. Paul has the title and the right to his heavenly "house" and does not hesitate to claim it as his.

Building of God. Paul also speaks of his "building of God" as a "house which is from heaven" (v. 2), and of its being "not made with hands" but "eternal" (v. 1). He speaks of taking possession of that house as being "clothed upon" with it (v. 2), and of being "absent from the body" when he is "present with the Lord" (v. 8). Some have identified this "building" with the "mansions" of John 14:2. But if reference is to literal heavenly mansions, then the earthly house should also refer to literal earthly houses. But this is obviously not what the writer has in mind. Most Biblical expositors agree that Paul here refers to the "spiritual body" given to the believer at the time of the resurrection (see on 1 Cor. 15:35–54). He speaks of his "earthly house" as a "tent," and of his heavenly "house" as a "building." One is a temporary dwelling place, the other permanent. The bodies of the resurrected saints will resemble that of their resurrected Lord (Luke 24:36–43; Phil. 3:21).

2. We groan. The future life was so real to Paul that he looked anxiously forward to the time when he might exchange this life for it. He knew that a glorious body awaited him, and he groaned with ardent longing to take possession of it (Rom. 7:24; 8:23–25).

To be clothed. Gr. *ependuō*, "to put on over." Paul now blends the figure of a tent or house with that of clothing. His absolute confidence in the resurrection and in the promises of God makes the future life appear incomparably preferable to this one. Paul would have been happy to exchange his mortal body for his future immortal body without experiencing death, which he describes as being "found naked" (v. 3). Those who "sleep in Jesus" and those who "are alive and remain" all receive their immortal bodies at the same time, the resurrection day (1 Thess. 4:14–17; cf. 1 Cor. 15:51–54; 2 Tim. 4:6–8). Paul would have preferred translation without seeing death.

From heaven. See on v. 1.

3. Being clothed. That is, either with the earthly, mortal body, or with the heavenly, immortal body.

Found naked. That is, with neither an “earthly house” (v. 1) nor a “house ... from heaven” (v. 2). If possible, Paul chose to be translated without seeing death. He would join the elect company of Enoch and Elijah, who were translated to heaven without seeing death (Gen. 5:24; 2 Kings 2:11). Had this intermediate state, in which he would have neither an earthly nor a heavenly body, offered the prospect of a state of disembodied bliss in the presence of God, Paul would not have so earnestly desired to avoid it (2 Cor. 5:2–4). If such a state of bliss were possible, why would the apostle so ardently desire to be cumbered with another body, even though it were a heavenly body? See on v. 4.

4. Do groan. See on 2 Cor. 5:2; cf. Rom. 8:20–23.

Being burdened. Paul is fully aware of the frailty of the mortal tent, which must sooner or later be dissolved (see ch. 4:7–12). He longs to be released from all the frailties and sufferings of this present life. His recent experience at Ephesus and his anxiety for the church at Corinth had been almost beyond human endurance (see on chs. 1:8, 9; 2:13; 11:23–28).

Unclothed. That is, without either a mortal or an immortal body.

Swallowed up of life. It is plain from v. 4 that mortality is not exchanged for immortality until one is “clothed” with the “house ... from heaven” (v. 2). Paul here gives no support to the unscriptural teaching that at death, when one is “unclothed,” he enters upon an immortal state of existence (see on 1 Cor. 15:51–54; 1 Thess. 4:15–17; 2 Tim. 4:6–8).

5. Wrought. Gr. *katergazomai*, “to perform,” “to accomplish,” “to achieve,” “to prepare.” It is the work of the gospel to qualify men to receive “life” (see Eph. 2:10; 1 Peter 5:10).

Selfsame thing. That is, the exchange of mortality for immortality. The Christian is the most contented man in the world; he is also the least contented with the world. He is like a traveler—perfectly satisfied with the inn as an inn, but having his desires ever in the direction of home. His longing is for the eternal realities, not the transient things of earth. The carnal mind is satisfied with what the eyes can see; the mind of the Christian, with things that are invisible (see ch. 4:18). The earnest longing for righteousness and for the eternal world—in preference to the baubles of this world—is evidence of genuine conversion and Christian maturity (see on Matt. 5:48).

Earnest. See on ch. 1:22.

6. Always confident. There was never the least doubt in Paul’s mind concerning the certainty of the resurrection (see on v. 14).

The body. Or, the “earthly house” (see on v. 1).

Absent from the Lord. That is, not in His immediate presence, not yet “clothed upon” with the “house which is from heaven” (v. 2), not able to see Him “face to face” (1 Cor. 13:12; cf. 3 John 14). See on v. 8.

7. We walk. That is, live, as Christians in this present life (Rom. 6:4; 8:1, 4; 13:13; 1 Cor. 7:17; Gal. 5:16; Eph. 2:2, 10).

By faith. Paul’s confidence in the resurrection (vs. 6, 8) has faith for its basis (see on ch. 4:18). In this life the apostle walks by faith, as in the life to come he will walk by sight.

Sight. Gr. *eidos*, “external appearance,” “form,” “shape.” *Eidos* refers to the thing which is seen, not to the faculty of seeing (cf. Luke 9:29, “fashion”; John 5:37). We believe in the Lord without having seen Him. Until the time when we do see Him face to face our manner of life as Christians rests on our belief in the unseen. There are two worlds, the visible and the invisible, which would be one except for the entrance of sin. A person walks by sight when he is under the influence of the material things of time, but he walks by faith when he is under the influence of things eternal. The decisions of the unregenerate man are made, his conduct determined, by external appearances. But the Christian has so firm a conviction regarding the realities of the eternal world that he thinks and acts by faith, in the light of things visible only to the eye of faith (see on Matt. 6:24–34; 2 Cor. 4:18). Those who walk by sight instead of by faith thereby express doubt concerning the invisible realities and the promises of God. By faith the kingdom of God becomes a living reality, here and now. Faith comes by “hearing,” and “hearing by the word of God” (see on Rom. 10:17). See on Heb. 11:1, 6, 13, 27, 39.

8. Absent from the body. That is, from life in the present world.

Present with the Lord. From a superficial reading of vs. 6–8 some have concluded that at death the soul of the Christian goes immediately to be “present with the Lord,” and that Paul, ardently desiring to be with the Lord (v. 2), welcomed death. But in vs. 3, 4 Paul describes death as a state of being “naked,” or “unclothed.” He hopes, if at all possible, to avoid this intermediate state, and ardently desires to be “clothed” with his “house ... from heaven.” In other words, he hopes to be translated without seeing death (see on vs. 2–4). Elsewhere (see on 1 Cor. 15:51–54; 1 Thess. 4:15–17; 2 Tim. 4:6–8; etc.) Paul makes it certain that men are not “clothed” with immortality individually at death, but simultaneously at the resurrection of the just.

Or, to restate it in this way: In 2 Cor. 5:2–4 Paul has already declared that “life,” obviously meaning immortal life, comes when one is “clothed upon” with his “house ... from heaven” at the resurrection (see on v. 4), not in the “naked,” or “unclothed,” state of death. In v. 8 he expresses the desire to be “absent from the body” and “present with the Lord,” but it is obvious that being “absent from the body” does not mean being disembodied (“naked,” or “unclothed”), for in vs. 2–4 he has stated clearly that he does *not* desire this intermediate state and would avoid it if at all possible. To have “life” (v. 4) and to be “present with the Lord” (v. 8) thus requires possession of the “house ... from heaven” (v. 2). Careful scrutiny of Paul’s statements thus clearly and decisively rules out any possibility of a state between death and the resurrection in which, as disembodied (“naked,” or “unclothed”) spirits, men go to be “present with the Lord.” Compare Rom. 8:22, 23; see on Phil. 1:21–23.

The Bible declares death to be but a sleep from which believers will be awakened at the first resurrection (John 11:11–14, 25, 26; 1 Cor. 15:20, 51–54; 1 Thess. 4:14–17; 5:10). It is not until then that both the living and the resurrected saints will be with the Lord (see on 1 Thess. 4:16–18). Neither group precedes the other (cf. Heb. 11:39, 40).

9. Wherefore. That is, in view of Paul’s confidence in the resurrection and the future life (vs. 6–8).

Labour. Gr. *philotimeomai*, “to be actuated by a love of honor,” “to strive earnestly for” (cf. Rom. 15:20; 1 Thess. 4:11). The motive that ever spurred Paul onward, in spite of the trials that beat down upon him (cf. 2 Cor. 4:7–18), was the glorious prospect of the resurrection, or of translation without death, both for himself and for his converts. Paul

personally strove to be “accepted” when he should stand before “the judgment seat of Christ” (ch. 5:10). He labored, not to earn merit before God, not to atone for his sins, not to add something to the gift of Christ’s righteousness, but to cooperate with Christ in the task of saving his fellow men (1 Cor. 15:9, 10; Col. 1:29). He labored, as well, to make everything in his own life a reflection of Christ, for he knew this would be pleasing and acceptable in the sight of the Lord. The difference between the sincere and the insincere believer is that one seeks the approbation of God and the other the approbation of man. He who resolves to live, not for himself, but for Christ, will not spend his time in ease and idleness or in the pursuit of worldly pleasure (Gal. 1:10).

It is said that in ancient times a refiner of gold gazed intently at the molten metal in his crucible until he could see his own face mirrored in it. Then he knew that it was pure. Thus it is with Christ, who looks for His own reflection in us (cf. Job 23:10). It is our privilege to become like Christ, of whom it is said that He “pleased not himself” (Rom. 15:3; cf. Heb. 11:5). There is all the difference in the world between doing right only because it is right and because God requires it, and doing it for the joy that comes when it is done for Christ’s sake. Laudable as it may be to do right from a sense of duty, how much better to do it from a heart overflowing with love for the Master. It was the love of Christ that constrained Paul to live as he did (2 Cor. 5:14). The burden of obedience to God’s commandments becomes light when it is motivated by love (see on Matt. 22:28–30; cf. Rom. 8:1–4). The sincere desire to please Christ enables the Christian to discern, with unerring accuracy, between that which is evil and that which is good (see on Rom. 8:5–8).

Whether present or absent. See on vs. 6, 8.

Accepted of him. The great concern was not whether Paul should live on, or whether his earthly labors should be brought to a close. His concern was only that, whatever might happen, his life should be such that it would meet the approval of God (see 2 Tim. 4:6–8; see on Matt. 25:21; Luke 19:17).

10. For we must. The conjunction “for” connects this verse with what has gone before. Anticipation of being called upon to stand before God on the great judgment day was one of Paul’s reasons for seeking so earnestly to be found acceptable before God. Faithfully and selflessly he purposed to discharge the trust committed to him as an ambassador for Christ. Those for whom the solemnity of that day has reality will ever be diligent and serious in seeking to make God first and to please Him in their daily lives.

The final judgment is necessary to the vindication of God’s character and justice (Ps. 51:4; Rom. 2:5; 3:26). In the present earthly state the best of men are often most afflicted, while the worst of men may prosper (Ps. 37:35–39; cf. Rev. 6:9–11). The character of God requires that in the end it shall be well with them that do good, and ill with them that do evil. This state of affairs does not now exist, and therefore there must be a day when the wrongs of the present time are made right. It is also necessary in order that Christ may triumph over the prince of darkness and his followers (Isa. 45:23; Rom. 14:10, 11; Phil. 2:10; GC 666–671), and that Christ may take to Himself that which He has purchased with His own blood (Heb. 2:11–13; cf. John 14:1–3).

Appear. Gr. *phaneroō*, “to make manifest,” “to make visible,” “to make known,” “to show openly,” “to make public.” This word occurs nine times in 2 Corinthians. On that great day men will not only put in an appearance at the bar of justice, but will stand revealed as to what manner of persons they are. The secrets of their lives will be made

bare (Eccl. 12:14; Rom. 2:16; 1 Cor. 4:5). All will have a fair hearing (cf. Jude 15). No man will be judged in his absence, or by proxy (Rom. 14:12; cf. James 2:12, 13).

Judgment seat. Gr. *bēma*, “a raised platform,” from which a formal Roman trial was conducted. Christ is to be the final judge (Matt. 11:27; John 5:22–27; Acts 17:31; 1 Peter 4:5). He is particularly fitted for this task. He is the world’s Creator and its Redeemer. It is a most awesome thought that our Saviour is to be our judge. He took upon Him the nature of those who will come before His bar of justice (Phil. 2:6–8), those whose destiny He will decide. He suffered every temptation to which they have been subjected (Heb. 2:14–17; 4:15). He stood in man’s place. In Christ divine wisdom is combined with human experience. His understanding and insight are infinite (Heb. 4:13). In Christ the righteousness of God has been united with that of a perfect Man. In His role as “Judge of all,” God the Father is united with Christ (Heb. 12:23, 24), and is seen by John the revelator upon a “great white throne” at the end of the thousand years (Rev. 20:11, 12).

Receive. Gr. *komizō*, “to receive as a reward,” “to care for,” “to carry away.” Good or bad, men’s deeds are recorded in heaven (Eccl. 12:13, 14; cf. Eph. 6:8; Col. 3:25; 1 Tim. 6:19).

In his body. That is, in this life (see on v. 6). Obviously, probation is here limited to man’s existence in this present world and terminates with the dissolution of the body (v. 1).

According to. A man’s deeds will be compared with the great standard of conduct, the law of God (Eccl. 12:13, 14; Rom. 2:12, 13; James 1:25; 2:10–12). In the final judgment there will be no vague standard of righteousness, and thus no chance to escape a just recompense by a belated appeal to divine mercy (Gal. 6:7; Rev. 22:12).

11. Terror. Gr. *phobos*, elsewhere in the NT always translated “fear.” This fear is something far different from the terror that lost sinners will one day experience. Godly fear is the beginning of wisdom (Ps. 111:10; Prov. 9:10). It is synonymous with profound reverence such as Isaiah felt when in God’s presence (Isa. 6:5), and is based on a realization of the character, majesty, and greatness of God, and of one’s own unworthiness. It is the root and mainspring of true piety. It prevents conceit (see Prov. 26:12), and is a deterrent to sin (2 Chron. 19:7; Job 1:1, 8; 28:28; Prov. 8:13; Acts 5:5). It gives release from all other fears (Prov. 14:26, 27; 19:23). He who stands in awe of God can be free of all anxiety. The fear of the Lord is reverent adoration and obedient respect for a loving heavenly Father (Ps. 103:11; cf. Ps. 111:10). See on Ps. 19:9.

Persuade men. See on v. 20.

We are made manifest. What we are is known to God, and as the Greek implies, has been known to Him all along. God is fully aware of Paul’s high purpose to please Him, above all else, and Paul trusts that the Corinthian believers, as well, are now persuaded thereof. Some, if not many, of them had been tempted to doubt his good faith, and he appeals to their conscientious judgment, longing to have them acknowledge the fact. His true character as an ambassador for Christ (v. 20) should now be apparent to all of them.

12. We commend not. Throughout both epistles to the Corinthians, Paul has been defending and magnifying his ministry, not to exalt himself, but to win the confidence of the Corinthians in his message and in himself as God’s messenger. His preaching among them had been with power (1 Cor. 2:4; 1 Cor. 15:1, 2). He was their spiritual father (1 Cor. 4:15) and their leader in spiritual things (ch. 11:1). His ministry had been one of the

“spirit,” not of the “letter”; of inward transformation, not of outward appearance (2 Cor. 3:6). Its basis of recommendation was the transparency and purity of the truth proclaimed (ch. 4:1, 2), and the sacrifice and suffering Paul had continually endured for the truth’s sake (chs. 4:8–10; 11:21–30). All this the Corinthians might construe as boasting. Doubtless many had already placed this interpretation upon such declarations in Paul’s former epistle, as would appear from his use here of the word “again” (cf. ch. 3:1). He now declares categorically that in all he has written he is not boasting. His purpose is to answer the derogatory remarks of those who were belittling his ministry.

Occasion. Gr. *aphormē*, “base of operations,” “starting point,” “incentive.” Paul now sets forth the purpose that prompted him to defend his ministry. The Corinthians were engaged in spiritual warfare with enemies of the gospel who sought positions of leadership in the church and who attempted to advance themselves by discrediting Paul. They had come with credentials in the form of letters of recommendation, supposedly from the brethren in Judea. They represented Paul as a self-appointed upstart, and themselves as vested with authority by the apostles (see on ch. 3:1). Not only so, they claimed to be leaders and “ministers” (ch. 11:22, 23). Paul refers to them as “false apostles” and “deceitful workers” (ch. 11:13). Evidently a considerable number of the Corinthian believers had been deceived by these men, who connived to take over the leadership of the Corinthian church. Paul declares that his sole object in defending his ministry is to provide the church with correct information and adequate answers with which to silence these false apostles.

Glory. That is, be proud of some one or some thing (see on ch. 1:14, where the cognate noun is translated “rejoicing”).

Appearance. Literally, “face,” “countenance,” and thus “outward appearance.” These self-appointed apostles are not what they pretend, and appear to be. They may have “letters of commendation,” but they do not have the inward witness of the Spirit in the hearts of converted and consecrated men and women (see on ch. 3:1–3). Upon those whose judgment was based on external appearance (see on 1 Sam. 16:7), these false leaders made a better impression than Paul had been able to make (see 2 Cor. 10:10). Some Corinthians had even been led to make sport of Paul’s personal defects—his bodily weakness and his poor sight (2 Cor. 10:1, 17, 12; 12:8–10; Gal. 4:13–15; see EGW Supplementary Material on 2 Cor. 12:7–9). Furthermore, Paul acknowledged himself “rude” and simple of speech (2 Cor. 11:6). The claim of the false apostles to superior ministerial authority was apparently based on a closer personal association with older apostles and on rigorous adherence to the “letter” of Hebrew orthodoxy (see on ch. 3:1–3). Their boast was based on purely external values. They appeared to be oblivious of those higher, spiritual qualities of which Paul chooses to boast, if boast he must (cf. Gal. 6:14).

13. Beside ourselves. Gr. *existēmi*, “to throw out of position,” hence, “to be out of one’s mind,” or “to be insane.” It is also defined “to be astonished,” “to be amazed.” Here the context requires the former definition. Paul’s opponents had apparently charged Paul with being mentally deranged, perhaps basing their accusation on his miraculous conversion, his visions (2 Cor. 12:1–4; Gal. 1:12), his burning zeal for God, his apparent courting of almost certain martyrdom (2 Cor. 12:10), and the revolutionary character of his teaching. Some years later Festus made the same charge (Acts 26:24), one that even Jesus’ friends had once made against Jesus (see on Mark 3:21; cf. Matt. 12:24).

It is to God. Those aspects of Paul's life and ministry to which his enemies might have pointed as symptoms of mental derangement were actually evidences of his devotion to the Lord.

Sober. Gr. *sōphroneō*, "to be of sound mind," "to be in [one's] right mind," the opposite of being "beside" oneself. Acts reflecting sober-mindedness and moderation were for the welfare and salvation of his converts. Paul cared not about the charges. What if his enemies did think him insane? He had but one objective in view—the honor and glory of God and the salvation of his fellow men.

For your cause. Ever forgetful of himself, as his ceaseless labors and frequent sufferings made evident, Paul lived for others.

14. Love. Gr. *agapē* (see on Matt. 5:43, 44; 1 Cor. 13:1).

Of Christ. Paul doubtless refers to Christ's love for him, rather than to his love for Christ (see Rom. 5:5; 8:35, 39; 2 Cor. 13:14; Eph. 3:19; cf. 4T 457; 7T 139; GW 293). Although nothing but the love of Christ can be an adequate controlling power in the life, it is true that our love for Him is also vital. But Christ's love for us is ever the dominant factor—"we love him, because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19; cf. John 3:16).

Constraineth. Gr. *sunechō*, "to hold together," "to hold fast," "to urge," "to impel," "to control." He who chooses to be guided by the love of Christ will not turn aside from the path of duty, whether to the right hand or to the left, but will, like Paul, press forward in the Lord's work, undaunted and with singleness of mind (see Acts 20:24; 2 Cor. 4:7–11). The love of Christ keeps the believer safely in the strait and narrow way (see on Matt. 7:13, 14).

We thus judge. Or, "we have decided," "we are convinced." Paul's declaration of consecration in vs. 14, 15 is doubtless an expression of the decision to which he came at conversion (see Acts 9:6; 26:19). Ever since, the great truth of Christ's atonement has been the motivating and controlling factor in his life.

If ... then. Gr. *ei ... ara*. Textual evidence attests (cf. p. 10) the omission of *ei*. Accepting this omission, *ara* should be translated "and so," "accordingly," "consequently."

One died for all. The vicarious, substitutionary death of Christ, the truth that He died in the place of the sinner, is not open to question, as an "if" might imply (see on Isa. 53:4; Matt. 20:28). In taking Adam's place (1 Cor. 15:22, 45) Christ became the head of the human race, and died on the cross as its representative. Thus, in a sense, when He died the entire race died with Him. As He represented all men, so His death stood for the death of all (1 Peter 3:18; 1 John 2:2; 4:10; see on Rom. 5:12, 18, 19). In Him all men died; He paid in full the claims of the law (John 3:16; Rom. 6:23). His death was adequate to pay the penalty for all sin. This does not, however, mean universal salvation, for each individual sinner must accept the atonement provided by the Saviour in order to make it effective in his own case (see on John 1:9–12; John 3:16–19). On the other hand, there is no scriptural basis for limiting the word "all" to a supposedly elect minority, with the rest of mankind excluded from access to the saving grace of the cross and therefore predestined to be lost (see on John 3:16–21; Eph. 1:4–6).

Not only did the death of Christ provide an atonement for sin, and thereby deliver repentant sinners from the second death (see Rev. 20:5, 14), it also made possible their

dying to the depraved, unregenerate nature and their rising to walk in newness of life (see on Rom. 6:3, 4; cf. Gal. 2:19, 20; Phil. 3:10; Col. 3:3).

15. *They which live.* Paul proceeds to amplify the import of Christ's death (see on v. 14). He speaks concerning the experience of those who have been "baptized into his death" (Rom. 6:3) and have risen to "walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:4; cf. Eph. 2:5–7). Legally, their debt of sin is canceled, and they stand justified before God. Spiritually, they are enabled by divine grace to live a life acceptable to God, here and now, and through all eternity. The emphasis here is the complete reorientation of the life from self to God. The new life bears witness to the transforming power of the Holy Spirit. The heart's warmest affections and best energies are given to Christ, in the small things of life as well as in the great. The life brings forth the fruits of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22, 23) and reflects the soul's delight in doing the will of God (Ps. 1:2; 119:97). Love to God and to one's fellow men becomes life's controlling motive, and the glory of God is the end of all thought and action. Such a life becomes more and more sensitive to sin, more conscious of its own need, and more ready to depend upon the grace of Christ.

16. *Know we.* That is, we form an estimate of. In the Greek the "we" is emphatic. Paul places himself in contrast with others, probably his opponents in the Corinthian church, who stressed the "letter" of the law and made so much of external appearances (see on chs. 3:1–3; 4:18).

After the flesh. Paul refuses to evaluate men on the basis of outward appearance. Such considerations as nationality, ancestry, education, culture, wealth, position, and human approbation are not the standards by which he proposes to judge mankind (cf. 1 Cor. 1:26; 2 Cor. 1:17). It is the "new creature" that counts (ch. 5:17). Paul now estimates men from Christ's point of view, according to their character and attitude toward spiritual things (see Matt. 5:19; 7:20–27; 12:46–50). This new standard for evaluating men is another result of the death and glorious resurrection of Christ. The mature Christian sees every man as a sinner to be saved and restored to the image of God, and thus to be made a candidate for the kingdom of heaven. Superficial appearance is of little value; it is the heart that counts (see on 1 Sam. 16:7; 2 Cor. 4:18). From this point of view a man of immense wealth may be extremely poor, and a man of great learning altogether ignorant (see on Matt. 6:19–34; 1 Cor. 1:21–23; Col. 2:8).

Known Christ. Prior to conversion Paul had evidently looked upon Christ from a purely human viewpoint—as a despised Nazarene, a man of lowly birth and without a formal education, a pauper, and an impostor who had been rejected and crucified.

Through the centuries countless thousands of carnal-minded men have made the same mistake. Our day is replete with humanistic evaluations of Christ. Men of learning speak of Him as a great teacher, philosophers look upon Him as an oracle of truth and wisdom, sociologists credit Him with being a great social reformer, psychologists see Him as a profound student of human nature, and theologians consider Him as foremost among the founders of the world's great religions. But to these men Jesus is at most the greatest, wisest, and best of the world's great men. The scholarly world has put forth laborious effort designed to re-create the historical and cultural background of the human Jesus, but has largely neglected to strive for a deeper appreciation of His divinity and of His role as man's Saviour from sin. To read the Bible as one would read other books is to see in Christ no more than a man like other men. It is possible to dwell on the known incidents of the life of Jesus, to form a lofty conception of Him, and to construct a beautiful system

of ethics from His teachings, and yet miss the most important truths of the gospel. Flesh and blood does not discern in Him the divine-human Son of God and of man (Matt. 16:17). Spiritual perception alone is competent to discern spiritual things (1 Cor. 2:14). The man who is created anew in Christ Jesus (2 Cor. 5:17) does not minimize the historical Christ, but he goes beyond that conception of Him to magnify this lowly personage as Lord and God. He does this because his mind is illumined by the Spirit. "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost" (1 Cor. 12:3).

Now henceforth. That is, from the time of his conversion, when his viewpoint had changed. Prior to that time he had looked at Christ and other men through the narrow eyes of Judaism. As Saul, Paul had seen "no beauty" in Christ that led him to "desire" the Saviour (Isa. 53:2). The inevitable result had been hatred for Jesus as the Messiah and for His followers (Acts 8:3; 9:1).

Know we him no more. That is, from the unregenerate point of view that he held prior to conversion. Paul now knew by personal experience, not simply by hearsay. Paul's opponents at Corinth claimed greater authority and privilege on the basis of their association with the apostles at Jerusalem, and perhaps even with Jesus. But emphasis upon a knowledge of Christ "after the flesh" leads men to exaggerate the importance of those things about Him that were physically seen and were temporal, and to subordinate or ignore altogether the higher spiritual truths explicit and implicit in His life and teachings.

17. In Christ. Paul's favorite definition of what it is to be a Christian. When he became a Christian he was baptized "into Jesus Christ" (Rom. 6:3), and the new life he lives henceforth is centered in Christ (John 15:3-7). He is joined to Christ and wholly subject to His life, power, influence, and word. Paul's whole life moves in a new, spiritual sphere. Nothing is exempted.

Only "in Christ" can a sinner find acceptance with God (Phil. 3:9) and sustenance for living the new life (John 15:4, 5; Gal 2:20). The joys and sorrows, triumphs and sufferings, of life are all "in Christ" (Rom. 14:17; Phil. 3:9, 10). Even death is robbed of its sting, for those who "die in the Lord" are blessed (Rev. 14:13). Christianity elevates every human experience and obligation into a new relationship, designated by the term "in Christ."

Creature. Gr. *ktisis*, "creation," "thing created," "creature." For a man to be constrained by the love of Christ to live no longer unto self but unto God, to judge men no longer by appearance but by the spirit, to know Christ according to the spirit and not according to the flesh, he must be created a new being. To transform a lost sinner into a "new creature" requires the same creative energy that originally brought forth life (John 3:3, 5; Rom. 6:5, 6; Eph. 2:10; Col. 3:9, 10). It is a supernatural operation, altogether foreign to normal human experience.

This new nature is not the product of moral virtue presumed by some to be inherent in man, and requiring only growth and expression. There are thousands of so-called moral men who make no profession of being Christians, and who are not "new" creatures. The new nature is not merely the product of a desire, or even of a resolution, to do right (Rom. 7:15-18), of mental assent to certain doctrines, of an exchange of one set of opinions or feelings for another, or even of sorrow from sin. It is the result of the presence of a supernatural element introduced into a man, which results in his dying to sin and being born again. Thus are we created anew in the likeness of Christ, adopted as

sons and daughters of God, and set on a new path (see Eze. 36:26, 27; John 1:12, 13; 3:3–7; 5:24; Eph. 1:19; 2:1, 10; 4:24; Titus 3:5; James 1:18). Thus we are made partakers of the divine nature and are granted possession of eternal life (2 Peter 1:4; 1 John 5:11, 12). The new believer is not born a full-grown, mature Christian; he first has the spiritual inexperience and immaturity of infancy. But as a son of God he does have the privilege and opportunity to grow up into the full stature of Christ (see on Matt. 5:48; Eph. 4:14–16; 2 Peter 3:18).

Become new. See on Rom. 6:4–6. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the omission of the words “all things,” the last clause of v. 17 thus reading “they are become new.”

18. All things. That is, all of the “new” things of v. 17 in particular, and thus also the new ministry (chs. 3:6; 4:1) and the new discernment of character (ch. 5:16). God is the source of them all.

Reconciliation. Gr. *katallagē*, “exchange,” “reconciliation,” “restoration to favor.” In Rom. 5:11 the same word is translated “atonement” (see comment there). In the NT it denotes a return to favor with God (see Rom. 5:1, 10; Col. 1:20). The idea of reconciliation to God implies that in the past God and man enjoyed a state of fellowship, that there now exists a state of separation (Rom. 8:7), that God has taken the initiative to terminate this state, and that it is therefore again possible for man to enjoy fellowship with God.

Reconciliation involves no change on God’s part, for God never changes (Mal. 3:6; James 1:17; cf. Heb. 13:8). It is not God who needs to be reconciled to man, but man who needs to be reconciled to God (see 2 Cor. 5:18–20; Eph. 2:16; Col. 1:20–21). There has never been enmity on God’s part. Men sometimes conceive of God as a stern judge, angry with sinners, hard to be placated, unmerciful, ready to condemn. This characterization misrepresents Him and is an affront to Him. Christ did not have to go to the cross in order to appease God, but as a demonstration of His love. God did not demand the death of His Son, but gave Him out of a heart of infinite love (John 3:16; 1 John 4:9; see on Rom. 3:25). On the other hand, God cannot set aside His law and avert the consequences that follow its violation without denying His own character, of which His law is an expression. God has always hated sin. He cannot, in fairness, treat good and evil alike. The atonement does not change the law; it changes the enmity that resulted from its violation. Reconciliation removes the enmity by means of a substitutionary fulfillment of the law’s requirements.

19. To wit. In modern English, “namely,” or “that is to say.”

God was in Christ. A clearer rendition of the Greek of the first clause would be, “God was reconciling the world unto Himself in Christ [or “through Christ”].” Men must realize that although it was the Son who died on the cross, He died so as “the Lamb of God” (John 1:29).

Reconciling the world. The entrance of sin had set men at enmity with God, and it was the purpose of Christ in coming to this world to win back the affection and loyalty of men toward God.

Not imputing. Or, “not reckoning,” “not counting.” The trespasses are there on the record, charged against those who committed them, but divine mercy and justice have found a way to deal with the offenders as though they were not guilty. Sin is a debt (Matt. 6:12) for which the sinner must someday render an account (cf. Matt. 25:19). But God will not impute sin to those who have been reconciled to Him through Christ (Ps. 32:2).

Trespases. See on Matt. 6:14.

Committed unto us. Here is further proof of the love of God and of His willingness to forgive. The message of reconciliation has been deposited, as it were, in the minds and hearts of all who accept it for themselves, for distribution to others.

Word. See on John 1:1.

20. We are ambassadors. Gr. *presbeuō*, literally, “to be older,” and thus “to be an elder,” “to be ambassador.” This characterizes the ambassador as one distinguished by dignity and experience, and therefore vested with authority. Christ’s ambassadors become such by virtue of prior attachment to Him and to His cause (see on Acts 14:23). They are distinguished for their fidelity (1 Cor. 4:1, 2; 1 Tim. 1:12), their zeal, their personal understanding of and experience with the great truths of the gospel, and their diligence in study, in prayer, in soul winning, and in building up the church. There is no greater dignity or honor than that of being an ambassador for Christ and the kingdom of heaven.

As though God. It is the ambassador for Christ who speaks “the word of reconciliation” (v. 19). God speaks to men through His ambassadors, even as He reconciled the world to Himself through Christ. For a discussion of God’s interest in sinners see Isa. 1:18; Jer. 44:4; Eze. 33:11; Hosea 11:8.

In Christ’s stead. Literally, “for Christ,” that is, on behalf of Christ. The Christian ambassador is in no sense a substitute for Christ, but simply the one through whom reconciliation is effected. He is in no sense a priestly mediator, for there is only “one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 2:5). Reconciliation has already been provided in Christ. The minister is simply the agent by whom “the word of reconciliation” (2 Cor. 5:19) is proclaimed to others. He is not the creator or dispenser of it. He leads men and women into the presence of God, where they experience reconciliation for themselves. His task is to convince men that God has provided reconciliation in Christ. Each believer thus has access to, and deals directly with, God (Rom. 5:1; Eph. 2:13, 16–18; 3:12; Heb. 4:14–16).

Be ye reconciled. God is the author and dispenser of reconciliation, men are the recipients. Men cannot reconcile themselves to God by lamentation over past sins, by performing arduous service, or by practicing certain prescribed ceremonies. They receive reconciliation simply by repenting of their sins and accepting the gift of divine mercy.

21. Made him to be sin. That is, God treated Him as if He were a sinner, which He was not (see DA 25). The truths stated in v. 21 are among the most profound and significant in all the Bible. This verse sums up the plan of salvation, declaring the absolute sinlessness of Christ, the vicarious nature of His sacrifice, and man’s freedom from sin through Him. See on John 3:16.

Knew no sin. How Jesus could come to this world as a human being and “in all points” be “tempted like as we are, yet without sin” (Heb. 4:15) is an unfathomable mystery. He never committed sin, in word, in thought, or in deed. Throughout the entire course of His life He kept Himself from sin in every way. Here on earth He lived a holy, undefiled, and pure life, ever conscious of being in harmony with the Father’s will (John 8:46; 14:30; 15:10; Heb. 7:26; see Additional Note on John 1; see on Luke 2:52). Christ, the Sinless One, took sinful humanity to His warm heart of love and experienced the temptations that beset us without being in the least degree overcome by them. He “identified Himself with sinners” (DA 111). When, on the cross, Jesus came to the hour for which He had entered the world (John 8:20; 12:23, 27; 13:1; 17:1; 18:37), He was

“offered to bear the sins of many” (Heb. 9:28) and became the “Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29).

The guilt of the sins of the world was reckoned to Him as if it were all His own (Isa. 53:3–6; 1 Peter 2:22–24). “He was numbered with the transgressors” (Mark 15:28). Christ became identified with sin; He took it to Himself in a real sense and felt the horror of separation from God.

The righteousness of God. See on Rom. 5:19. As our sins were reckoned to Christ, as if they were His, so His righteousness is reckoned to us as if it were ours.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

- 1 6T 214
7 AA 51; Ev 64; ML 342; PK 175; 2T 339; 3T 14
10 PK 716; Te 143; 1T 123; 2T 312; 4T 84, 384; 5T 34, 483, 510; 6T 89; 7T 218
14 CH 633; COL 235; CSW 52; DA 564, 660; Ed 66, 297; FE 264, 294; MH 500; MM 316; 3T 188; 4T 457; 5T 206; 7T 139
15 COL 326; 5T 542
17 AA 476; Ed 172; FE 264; GC 461; LS 40; MH 492; ML 26; SC 57; SL 55; 1T 32; 2T 294; 4T 625; 5T 650; 8T 84
19 DA 762; Ed 28; GC 417, 502; PP 64, 366; SC 13, 35; 5T 739
20 DA 441, 510; EW 64; PP 580; 1T 431; 2T 102, 336, 342, 705; 4T 229, 393, 523; 6T 427
21 CSW 89; CT 22; FE 272; ML 11; MM 27; SR 225; 1T 482; 2T 212; 3T 372; 5T 229

CHAPTER 6

2

- 1 *That he hath approved himself a faithful minister of Christ, both by his exhortations, 3 and by integrity of life, 4 and by patient enduring all kinds of affliction and disgraces for the gospel. 10 Of which he speaketh the more boldly amongst them, because his heart is open to them, 13 and he expecteth the like affection from them again, 14 exhorting to flee the society and pollutions of idolaters, as being themselves temples of the living God.*

1. Workers together. The principle of cooperation is vital to personal spiritual accomplishment and to success in Christian service. God does not dispense with man’s voluntary cooperation (DA 535). Man’s capacity for good is completely dependent upon the measure of his cooperation with the divine (cf. John 5:19, 30; DA 297). Christian ministers and workers are not to attempt to labor in their own strength or wisdom, and God does not leave them to their own devices, or to their own resources. This cooperation between Christ and His ambassadors is to be so close and continuous that “they are enabled to do the deeds of Omnipotence” (DA 827). Christ is more than an observer, simply looking on; He is an active partner in all that they do (Phil. 2:12, 13; cf. Heb. 1:14).

Receive. Gr. *dechomai*, here, “to receive favorably,” “to approve,” “to embrace.” It is possible to give mental assent to the grace of God and yet not be benefited by it. This truth Christ illustrated by the seed that fell on stony ground and among thorns (see on Matt. 13:5–7). Even though the Corinthians had responded to Paul’s earlier exhortations

²Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (2 Co 3:1). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.

and had been reconciled to God, this was not enough. The work of their salvation, individually, was not yet complete. The Christian life has only begun when men are reconciled to God and thereby enter upon a new relationship with Him. It is true that at the moment of reconciliation they are in a saved state. They stand justified by the grace of God. But the gospel of Christ includes much more than the forgiveness of past sins; it envisions, as well, a transformation of character whose goal is a life into which sin does not enter (see on Rom. 6:5–16; 2 Cor. 1:22; 3:18). The initial reception of God's grace, which brings justification, is to be followed by a continuous reception of grace, which produces sanctification.

Grace. See on Rom. 3:24.

In vain. That is, without its having served any useful purpose (cf. Isa. 55:10, 11). The important thing is the way man receives grace, and continues to receive it (see on Matt. 13:23; Acts 2:41).

God's grace is received in vain—

1. When it is neglected. Persistent inattention may deafen the heart to God's voice. A guidebook for a journey is of little value to a man who blunders along without studying it or following its instructions.
2. When it is perverted by using it as a cloak for sin (Rom. 6:1, 15). The unscriptural argument that God's grace abrogates His law (see on Rom. 3:31) is advanced by some as an excuse for doing as they please instead of obeying God (see Heb. 10:29).
3. When it is adulterated with human ideas and methods. Men receive God's grace in vain when they seek to earn merit before God by a punctilious legalism (Rom. 6:14, 15; Gal. 2:21; 5:4; Eph 2:8, 9).
4. When it is received only by the intellect and is not taken into the life; when it does not purify the heart and lead to full and eager obedience to the Word of God. Comprehension without application is like studying food chemistry but neglecting to eat (Matt. 7:20–24).

If there is no advancement beyond the first step of justification, the grace of God has been received in vain. It has served no useful purpose. It is sometimes necessary to prime a pump in order to start it operating, but the priming is not an end in itself. In the same way, God imparts grace to justify the repentant sinner, but only in order to place him in a position where he can receive continuing grace to help him live above sin. Justification by grace is but the beginning of the Christian life.

2. I have heard thee. This verse is a parenthetical comment on the reception of divine grace (v. 1). It constitutes an urgent appeal to men to seek reconciliation with God lest they receive the grace of God in vain. The quotation is from the LXX of Isa. 49:8 (see comment there). Isaiah looks forward to the "day of salvation" as the time of the Messiah. Paul here recognizes that the prophecy has been fulfilled in Christ. The first advent of Christ ushered in an era that is favorable to salvation (see DA 37). So long as Christ intercedes for sinners the "day of salvation" will continue.

Succoured. That is, helped.

Accepted time. That is, a time when repentant sinners will be received (see on Isa. 49:8).

Day of salvation. That is, the time during which the light of probation lingers (see John 12:35). Eventually the day of mercy will close, and when it does there will be no second chance for those who have spurned God's grace. Men often procrastinate because they think the day of salvation will continue indefinitely, that temporal matters require

first consideration, that pleasure must be pursued, that it will be easier to repent and believe tomorrow than it is today. They forget that the only time man has for salvation and for victory over any sin is the present moment, and that victory postponed becomes defeat. Delay is both foolish and dangerous. Life may be cut short; deterioration of mind and body may make attention to spiritual things difficult or impossible. The heart may be fatally hardened and the desire for salvation lost; the Holy Spirit may cease to strive. Procrastination is ultimately equivalent to rejection.

3. Offence. Literally, “an occasion for stumbling.” Paul aspires so to conduct his ministry (cf. v. 1) as to give men no excuse, on his account, for rejecting the grace of God. It is therefore imperative that his own life shall be in complete harmony with the gospel he preaches. In vs. 3–10 Paul lists evidences that his life is in harmony with his message. He has given the Corinthians no reason to blame him as a minister.

Ministry. Textual evidence may be cited (cf. p. 10) for reading “our ministry.” Paul here speaks of his own service as an ambassador for Christ. He had suffered, labored, studied, and ministered the Word so as to avoid giving any occasion for offense (1 Cor. 8:13; 10:32, 33; Phil. 2:15; 1 Thess. 2:10; 5:22; cf. 10:16). Nevertheless, there were a number in Corinth who had taken offense. It would perhaps be impossible to preach and to act so that none would be offended. To some, even truth and holiness give offense; men who listened to Jesus were offended at Him (John 6:60, 61, 66). To others, any warning against sin or error gives offense. But to true Christians, the gospel ambassador will give no offense by manifestations of pride, irreverence, aloofness, questionable habits or practices, discourtesy, or vulgarity.

As far as possible, the gospel minister should “live peaceably with all men” (Rom. 12:18), yet both Jesus and Paul stirred up enmity wherever they went. Jesus “came not to send peace, but a sword” (Matt. 10:34), and warned that a “man’s foes shall be they of his own household” (v. 36). No Christian has ever encountered more enemies than Christ, and His disciples were charged with having “turned the world upside down” (Acts 17:6). In every age God’s servants have found conflict unavoidable. Christian virtue and God’s standard of righteousness often stand in the way of men’s sinful pleasures, and wicked men are prone to charge as disturbers those who sound a warning against their evil ways. No minister can hope to preach the truth faithfully without offending men whose lives are thereby shown to be wrong.

4. Approving ourselves. Paul again takes up the problem of commendation, which he refers to frequently in this epistle (chs. 3:1–3; 4:2; 5:12; 10:12, 13, 17, 18). He has sought to make a clear distinction between the right type of commendation and that which is false. In ch. 6:3–10 he commends his own ministry, pointing to his personal conduct and to his life of labor and suffering for Christ. True commendation consists of deeds, not words.

Patience. Gr. *hupomonē*, “steadfastness,” “constancy,” “endurance,” “patient waiting” (cf. Luke 8:15; 21:19).

Afflictions. Gr. *thlipsis*, “oppression,” “distresses,” “straits,” literally, “pressings together,” “pressures” (cf. chs. 1:4, 8; 2:4; 4:17; etc.).

Necessities. Gr. *anagkai*, “calamities,” literally, “tight pressings.”

Distresses. Gr. *stenochōriai*, “dire calamities,” “extreme afflictions,” literally, “narrow spaces.” This word depicts a state of extreme and pressing need, in which one is

hemmed in, as it were, with no room left in which to move. Paul here refers to extremely difficult and seemingly impossible situations such as the Israelites faced at the Red Sea (Ex. 14:1–12).

5. *Stripes.* Or, “blows,” “beatings.” See on Matt. 10:17; 2 Cor. 11:24, 25.

Tumults. Gr. *akatastasiai*, “disorders,” “disturbances,” “confusion.” The same word is translated “commotions” in Luke 21:9. Paul and his companions were frequently the objects of these “tumults,” and were usually accused of starting them. Under such circumstances the apostles were in extreme danger. Such experiences befell them at Antioch in Pisidia (Acts 13:50), at Lystra (ch. 14:8–19), at Thessalonica (ch. 17:5), at Corinth (ch. 18:12), at Ephesus (ch. 19:23–41), and at Jerusalem (chs. 21:28–31; 23:7–10).

Labours. Probably a reference to Paul’s toil at tentmaking and the labors attending upon his ministry (1 Cor. 3:8; 4:12; 15:58; 1 Thess. 2:9; 2 Thess. 3:8).

Watchings. Or, “sleeplessness” (Acts 16:24, 25; 20:7, 31).

Fastings. Probably including both voluntary abstinence from food (Acts 9:9; Acts 13:2; Acts 14:23) and hunger resulting from poverty or other circumstances (2 Cor. 11:9, 27; Phil. 4:10–12).

6. *Pureness.* Thus far Paul has listed the difficulties attendant upon his ministry (cf. chs. 4:8–11; 11:23–27). Now he sets forth those positive moral and spiritual qualities that must characterize the life of the Christian minister in particular and validate his commission as an ambassador for Christ. These positive traits enable him to endure with fortitude the insults, persecution, and privation that circumstances impose upon him. By God’s grace these experiences mature, ennoble, and refine his character. Here Paul no doubt refers to both pure motives and pure conduct, to chastity of both mind and body. Purity is a primary requisite of a blameless ministry (cf. 2 Cor. 11:2; 1 Thess. 2:10; 1 Peter 3:2; 1 John 3:3; see on Matt. 5:8).

Knowledge. That is, of the kingdom of heaven, and including the entire field of divine truth revealed in the Bible. True religion does not thrive on a diet of ignorance. One of the most solemn duties incumbent upon every Christian is to gain a clear and comprehensive insight into the gospel as set forth in the Book of God. See on Luke 1:77; 11:52; 1 Cor. 1:5.

Longsuffering. Gr. *makrothumia*, “patience,” “perseverance,” “steadfastness,” “endurance.” The quality of long-suffering enables the minister to bear long with the faults, failings, and dullness sometimes encountered in prospective converts, and often in those who oppose the truth.

Kindness. Gr. *chrēstotēs*, “moral goodness,” “integrity,” “kindness” (see on Rom. 3:12). Knowledge by itself leads to pride and intolerance (1 Cor. 8:1–3). Many professed Christians who claim to know the truth find it impossible to defend the faith except by passionate arguments. They cannot speak for the truth without becoming angry with those who disagree. The Christian minister, particularly, needs to guard against this unchristian tendency. Especially in the midst of persecution, under false accusation, or when his converts do not seem to appreciate him as they should, he must watch his own spirit with close vigilance.

By the Holy Ghost. The Holy Spirit is the active agency in cultivating all these virtues (Gal. 5:22, 23). It is possible to possess these traits in some degree, superficially at least, apart from the Holy Spirit, but never in their fullness.

Love. Gr. *agapē* (see on Matt. 5:43, 44). The crowning characteristic of the gospel minister is this chief and all-pervading fruit of the Spirit (see on 1 Cor. 13). For comment on “love unfeigned” see on Rom. 12:9. Without this quality the ambassador of Christ becomes hard, cold, self-complacent, and censorious. Purity and power are impossible without love.

7. Truth. See on John 1:14; 8:32. No more exacting requirement is made of the minister than the proclamation of truth without diminishing from, or adding to, it. To be the embodiment of truth, in life, in word, in deed, constitutes the ultimate test of genuineness. God is truth (Ps. 31:5; Jer. 10:10), and truth is eternal as God is eternal (Ps. 100:5; 146:6). Christ incarnate was the full and perfect revelation of truth (John 14:6). Truth must be sought for diligently and made a means of regeneration (James 1:18) and sanctification (John 17:17), and a pattern for daily conduct (3 John 3, 4). Truth is of little value when entertained as an intellectual concept only (John 3:21; 1 John 1:6), for the wholehearted acceptance of truth means complete obedience to all of God’s revealed will. The possession and practice of truth is the mark of a true Christian (see on Matt. 7:21–27).

Power. Gr. *dunamis*, “strength,” “ability,” “inherent power.” Truth and power are complementary. The truth of God without the power of God has no practical value. Power alone, without truth, leads to oppression. Truth and power both come from God, and both must be under the control of love (see on ch. 5:14). The only valid authority for religious belief is truth as set forth in the Word of God, applied to the life by the power of God, and held under the control of His love.

Armour of righteousness. Paul uses the figure of warfare to describe the lot of the Christian (Eph. 6:11–17). To be clothed with the panoply of Christ’s armor is to be clothed with His righteousness.

8. Honour and dishonour. Verses 8–10 set forth a series of paired contrasts (cf. ch. 4:8–10). Most, if not all, of these experiences had come to Paul in connection with the recent crisis in the Corinthian church. His reaction to these changing circumstances commend him as a minister of the gospel. He remained patient and courageous, and thus good always resulted.

On the one hand, he had been honored by men (Gal. 4:14), and on the other, dishonored and discredited (1 Cor. 4:11–13). But he always replied in the spirit of Christ and in harmony with His commands (Matt. 5:38–42; Luke 6:22; 10:16; Gal. 1:10). The false apostles at Corinth had spoken evil of him. There were still some who held Paul’s preaching and ministry in contempt and spoke of him as an impostor (2 Cor. 2:17; 4:2; see on ch. 11:22). For Paul, this only provided an opportunity for fellowship with Christ in His sufferings (Phil. 3:10; cf. Matt. 5:11; 1 Peter 4:14). Paul and his companions gave no offense, either by showing resentment or by self-exaltation.

9. As unknown. That is, obscure. Possibly Paul refers to his lack of credentials (ch. 3:2). In contrast, the Judaizers (see on ch. 11:22) considered themselves men of distinction. Likewise, the world knew not our Lord (John 1:10). Even His brothers failed to recognize Him. His fellow townsmen knew Him only as “the carpenter’s son” (Matt. 13:55). Spiritual blindness hid the real Jesus from the eyes of His generation. So it is with

Christians in every age (John 16:33; 1 John 3:1, 13). The world acclaims greatness and power based on ancestry, wealth, intellectual greatness, and position, but greatness based on holiness and humility receives little recognition. Christians must be prepared for misrepresentation, misunderstanding, scorn, and persecution, because their life, experience, principles, ambitions, and hopes are meaningless to the natural man (1 Cor. 2:14).

Well known. That is, recognized and respected by men of sincerity.

As dying. To the secular eye Paul was perhaps at the point of death, but to the spiritual eye he had possession of eternal life (1 John 5:11, 12). His sufferings appeared to the dim vision of his opponents as evidence of God's displeasure and punishment, but with spiritual insight, Paul enjoyed fellowship with Christ in His sufferings (Phil. 3:10), and discerned evidences of God's great love for him (1 Cor. 11:32; Heb. 12:6; Rev. 3:19).

Chastened. Or, "chastised." See on ch. 4:9.

10. As sorrowful. Paul seems to have cause for nothing but melancholy. For him, however, sorrow and joy are not mutually exclusive alternatives, for he knows how to be glad in the midst of tribulation. He rejoices in God's providential leading, even when he has cause for sorrow. This attitude reflects the mind of Christ (Rom. 12:12; Phil. 4:4, 11; Heb. 2:10–18). Christianity not only sustains the soul in the hour of trial but imparts the spirit of joyful triumph and fills the mind with assurance and hope. (Isa. 61:3).

Paul's spirit of triumph is perhaps best set forth in the book of Philippians, whose key word is "rejoice." Yet when he wrote that book Paul was in prison, deserted, alone, and in danger of immediate execution. The true Christian can always rejoice in a good conscience, in a pure and noble mind, in divine favor, and in the salvation of his fellow men (Heb. 12:2). He has learned to be content, whatever he may be called upon to endure (Phil. 4:11). A life of contentment and joy is the Christian's inalienable birthright. To be delivered from the power of sin and the hands of Satan, to be "more than conquerors through him that loved us" (Rom. 8:37), to be saved "to the uttermost" (Heb. 7:25)—all this is cause enough for a life of joy and happiness.

Poor. That is, "poor in spirit" (see on Matt. 5:3). To the secular eye, Paul was poor indeed, but to the spiritual eye he was rich. He had suffered the loss of all things (1 Cor. 4:11; Phil. 3:7, 8; 4:12). It has generally been the choice and lot of Christians to remain poor in material things. Believers at Jerusalem willingly surrendered their earthly wealth (Acts 2:44, 45; 3:6; 5:1–3). Life cannot be estimated by appearances. As far as God's kingdom is concerned, things are not what they seem. Men become truly rich, not by keeping, but by giving (see on Prov. 11:24). They are made rich with the unsearchable riches of Christ (Isa. 55:1, 2; Acts 20:35; 2 Cor. 8:9; Eph. 3:8; 1 Tim. 6:18). They become rich by conferring Heaven's blessings on others (Isa. 58:6–14).

Possessing all things. In Christ the believer becomes heir and possessor of all things (Matt. 5:5; 16:25; 19:29; Mark 10:28–30; Rom. 8:17; 1 Cor. 3:21–23; Rev. 3:21). The gospel enriches men with noble thoughts, high purposes, elevating hopes, divine fellowship, purity of heart, harmony of being, the ability to enjoy all that God has made. See on Matt. 6:24–34.

11. Ye Corinthians. Here alone in his two epistles does Paul address the Corinthians by name. He appeals to them to reciprocate his love, to deal with him as he has dealt with them.

Our mouth is open. Paul was keeping nothing back from the Corinthians. He would say what there was to say, that they might know the facts.

Our heart. In all his dealings with them, in his exhortations and rebukes, in the face of their problems and criticism, Paul has been speaking out of the abundance of his heart. At no time, even to the present moment, has he avoided expressing his inmost thoughts and feelings to them. All along he has spoken openly and without reserve; he has kept nothing back (cf. Matt. 12:34; Rom. 10:10). His heart has always been full of love for them, and even now he yearns for them and for their loving response. He has met all their criticisms in the spirit of Christ, with largeness of heart.

12. Straitened. Or, “restricted,” “confined in a narrow place,” “compressed.” Paul’s love for them is in no way contracted. If there had been a lack of sympathetic understanding, it was not on his part. The Corinthians do not have a narrow place in his heart, but apparently some of them had scanty room for him in their affections.

Bowels. That is, the heart, lungs, liver, upper intestines, etc. This region of the body was considered by the ancients to be the seat of the affections (Phil. 1:8; 2:1). Whatever there may have been that was unpleasant and undesirable in the relations between Paul and the Corinthians, it did not exist in the hearts of Paul and his companions.

13. For a recompence. Paul considers the Corinthian believers his spiritual children (1 Cor. 4:14, 15), and as their spiritual father he has poured upon them a full measure of paternal love. In return, he longs for their love. Will they not enlarge their hearts enough to make room for him? To do so will be to solve all the problems and to remove all the ill feelings between them (cf. Gal. 4:12; 1 Thess. 2:11).

14. Be ye not. Literally, “do not become.” Chapters 6:14 to 7:1 constitute an extended parenthesis such as occurs often in the writings of Paul. It consists of a warning against any and every kind of association with unbelievers that would place Christians in situations where they find it difficult or impossible to avoid compromising principle. This prohibition includes the marriage relationship (see on ch. 7:1), but is by no means restricted to it. The admonition of this parenthetical passage was probably suggested to Paul’s mind by his counsel in ch. 6:12, 13, not to be narrowhearted and exclusive. If so, his purpose was to leave the Corinthians no reason for concluding that they were to be so largehearted as to enter into intimate fellowship with unbelievers. The fact that v. 14 begins with the words “do not become” indicates that Paul was thinking primarily of the future, rather than of the past.

Unequally yoked. Gr. *heterozugeō*, “to yoke in unequal partnership.” The prefix *hetero*— here denotes persons of a different kind (cf. on Matt. 6:24). In view of the fact that Paul is addressing the Corinthian church members as Christians, the others referred to are non-Christians. The principle here stated is similar to that of Ex. 34:16; Deut. 7:1–3; cf. Lev. 19:19; Deut. 22:10; Phil. 4:3. So great is the difference in ideals and conduct between Christians and non-Christians, believers and unbelievers, that to enter into any binding relationship with them, whether in marriage, in business, or otherwise, inevitably confronts the Christians with the alternatives of abandoning principle or enduring difficulties occasioned by differences in belief and conduct. To enter into such a union is to obey God and to bargain with the devil. Separateness from sin and sinners is explicitly set forth throughout the Scriptures (Lev. 20:24; Num. 6:3; Heb. 7:26; etc.). No other principle has been more strictly enjoined by God. Throughout the history of God’s people the violation of this principle has inevitably resulted in spiritual disaster.

With unbelievers. To those who do not accept Christ as their Saviour, and His teachings as their standard of belief and conduct, the ideals, principles, and practice of Christianity are foolishness (1 Cor. 1:18). By reason of their outlook on life, unbelievers often find it most difficult to tolerate a pattern of conduct that tends to restrict their own ways of living, or implies that their concepts and practices are evil or inferior. Paul does not forbid all association with unbelievers, but only such association as would tend to diminish the Christian's love for God, to adulterate the purity of his outlook on life, or to lead him to deviate from a strict pattern of conduct. Christians are not to shun their relatives and friends, but to associate with them as living examples of applied Christianity and so win them to Christ (1 Cor. 5:9, 10; 7:12; (10:27). The decisive question is, Does the Christian choose to associate with the unbeliever because of a fondness for the ways of the world, or because of a sincere desire to be a blessing to the unbeliever and to win him to Christ? A second question, and one of no less importance to the Christian himself, is, Whose influence is likely to prevail, that of Christ or that of the evil one? When it comes to a binding relationship such as marriage, however, the Christian who truly loves the Lord will under no circumstances unite with an unbeliever, even in the pious and otherwise commendable hope of winning him to Christ.

Almost without exception disappointment is the result of a course of action contrary to the wise counsel here set forth by the apostle. Those who choose to heed this counsel may expect in a special way to enjoy God's favor, and will find that He has something in store for them far surpassing any plans they might have had for themselves.

What fellowship? By a series of five rhetorical questions (vs. 14–16) Paul contrasts the irreconcilable and mutually exclusive opposition between the yoke of Christ and that of the world. Every union in which the character, beliefs, and interests of the Christian lose anything of their distinctiveness and integrity, is hereby prohibited. A Christian cannot afford to enter into any connection with the world that calls for compromise. The line of demarcation is clearly defined between (1) righteousness and unrighteousness, (2) light and darkness, (3) Christ and Satan, (4) faith and infidelity, (5) the temple of God and the temple of idols.

15. Concord. Gr. *sumphōnēsis*, “concord,” “agreement.” Concerning the related word *sumphōnia* see on Luke 15:25. Between Christ and Satan there is utter discord.

Belial. Gr. *Belial*, a transliteration from the Heb. *beliya'al*, “worthless one” (see on Deut. 13:13; Judges 19:22; 1 Sam. 2:12). However, textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the reading *Beliar*. The reading *Belial* appears only in few late manuscripts and probably entered KJV by way of the Latin Vulgate. Here the word is a personification for Satan, representing the worthlessness and emptiness of the things by means of which he seeks to attract and lure men into sin. It is also used of the followers of Satan (Deut. 15:9, margin; 1 Sam. 25:25; 30:22; Ps. 41:8, margin). Christ and Belial are the opposing leaders in the great controversy between righteousness and unrighteousness (Rev. 12:7–9; cf. ch. 20:7–9). Sin is not an abstract thing. Back of all that is true, holy, and righteous are the supernatural forces of the universe led by Christ. Back of all that is evil and worthless are the supernatural forces of darkness led by Satan. All the world is lined up behind one or the other (1 Peter 5:8–9; Rev. 12:11).

Man's choice between these two world rulers must be clear and decided. Christ is the Prince of light (John 1:9; 8:12). His followers are called the children of light (Matt. 5:14;

John 12:36; Eph. 5:8). They walk in the light, and their destiny is the city of light, where there is no darkness at all (John 12:35, 36; 1 Thess. 5:4, 5; 1 John 1:5–7; Rev. 22:5). Satan is the prince of darkness (Col. 1:13). His followers are the children of darkness (John 3:19; Eph. 5:11). They walk in darkness now, and their destiny is eternal darkness (Matt. 22:13; 25:30; 2 Peter 2:17; 1 John 1:6; Jude 13).

16. Agreement. Or, “assent,” “consent” (Luke 23:51). There can be no alliance between Christ and Satan, between the true God and false gods, between Christianity and heathenism. Paul declares that an alliance between believers and unbelievers is equally inconceivable.

Ye are the temple. See on 1 Cor. 3:16, 17; 6:19, 20.

I will dwell. Quoting from Lev. 26:11, 12 Paul draws an analogy between the Jewish Temple and the Christian church. The Temple at Jerusalem was built for the glory of Jehovah, was honored by the glory of His presence, in the Shekinah, and was His dwelling place (1 Kings 6:12, 13; cf. Ex. 25:8; 29:43–45; Heb. 8:1, 2). The church is composed of those who have been born into Christ (Heb. 3:6; 12:23). They constitute the body of Christ (Col. 1:24), who is the head (Eph. 1:22). He purposes to dwell in them as He did in the Temple of old (1 Cor. 3:16, 17; 6:19, 20); but how can He do so if they are in “agreement” with idols?

Be their God. This formula, “I will be their God, and they shall be my people,” occurs commonly throughout the OT, and constitutes a declaration of the covenant relationship into which God purposed to enter with Israel of old (see on Hosea 1:9, 10, and now purposes to enter with His people today).

17. Wherefore come out. Paul here combines various OT passages such as Isa. 52:11–12; Jer. 51:6, 45. The historical reference is to the departure of captive Israelites from ancient Babylon, which Paul here refers to as an illustration of the separation of God’s people from the world and from spiritual Babylon (see on Rev. 18:4). Upon their return from captivity the Jews were charged not to carry back with them anything savoring of pagan idolatry. Similarly, spiritual Israel is charged to “touch not the unclean thing” (see on Isa. 52:11, 12).

18. A Father. Verse 18 consists of another mosaic of ideas gathered from different passages of the OT (2 Sam. 7:8, 14; Isa. 43:6; Jer. 31:9). Compare 2 Cor. 6:18; see on Matt. 6:9.

Sons and daughters. The privilege of becoming the adopted sons and daughters of God is the supreme privilege He accords those who are born of the Spirit (see on John 1:12–13; 3:3, 5; 1 John 3:1, 2). God here promises to act the part of a father to those who become His children, to be their provider, protector, counselor, guide, and deliverer. Although men become sons of God by adoption, the same process is also spoken of as a new birth (John 1:12, 13; 3:3, 5).

As a result of the believer’s faith in Christ the supernatural operation of the Spirit of God creates new spiritual life, which makes the man a son of God. This Father-son relationship is as real and vital as the human relationship used to illustrate it. In the life of Jesus as *the* Son of God we have a perfect example of the relationship it is our privilege to bear to our heavenly Father as His sons (see on Luke 2:49; John 1:14; 4:34; 8:29). The key to this relationship is love, and its result is obedient trust. The essential quality of fatherhood is loving authority, as that of sonship is trust and obedience. Without these

qualities there can be no true fatherson experience (Rom. 8:9, 10; 2 Cor. 7:1; 1 John 1:1–7). God intends that they shall be a reality in the life of every Christian.

Almighty. A divine title also used here and frequently in the book of Revelation (Rev. 1:8; etc.). This title here emphasizes the certainty and the greatness of the promise of 2 Cor. 6:17, 18. Compare the Hebrew equivalent (see Vol. I, p. 171). Chapter 7:1 completes the sequence of thought which Paul began in ch. 6:14 (see comment there).

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

- 1 1T 381, 432; 6T 297
1–4MH 116
1–10FE 533
2 MB 151; MB 151; SC 34; 2T 102; 5T 635; 9T 129
3 GW 60
3–10AA 369; GW 60
7 EW 273; ML 94; PK 111, 725; 2T 446
10 Ed 68; SR 313
14 CS 38; Ev 617; LS 321; PP 175; 1T 200; 2T 44, 689; 4T 504, 505; 7T 108
14, 15 FE 476; GW 392; PK 58; TM 271; 2T 48; 3T 248; 4T 346
14–16MM 45
14–18FE 499, 533; MH 404; 3T 373; 5T 13, 364; 6T 195; 8T 223
15 CT 330; 1T 279, 289, 408; 2T 168, 344; 4T 187; 5T 52, 340
15, 16 PP 563
15–185T 431
16 DA 161, 311; Ed 258; GW 254; MH 146; TM 388; WM 130
16–18FE 480; TM 272
17 CH 291, 589; CT 328; EW 242; FE 311, 483, 501; MYP 313; PP 458; SR 60; Te 119;
1T 242, 279, 288, 405, 503; 2T 48, 125; 3T 126, 458; 4T 577, 583; 6T 95, 147
17, 18 CH 51; Ev 622; FE 142, 502; GC 475; LS 292; ML 260; MYP 81, 139; PK 59; PP
175; Te 189; 1T 510, 663; 2T 43, 441, 592; 3T 245, 566; 4T 109; 6T 91; 7T 164; 8T 41;
9T 17; WM 254
18 CH 590; ML 83, 86, 98; 2T 593; 4T 624, 653; 5T 348, 368; 6T 190; 7T 226; 8T 177; 9T
188, 287

CHAPTER 7

- 1 *He proceedeth in exhorting them to purity of life, 2 and to bear him like affection as he doth to them. 3 Whereof lest he might seem to doubt, he declareth what comfort he took in his afflictions, by the report which Titus gave of their godly sorrow, which his former epistle had wrought in them, 13 and of their lovingkindness and obedience towards Titus, answerable to his former boastings of them.*

1. These promises. That is, the promises of ch. 6:17, 18 (cf. 2 Peter 1:4). 2 Cor. 7:1 concludes the sequence of thought begun in ch. 6:14. Because of these great promises the Corinthians should strive for perfection of character. These glorious privileges are forfeited when unholiness and impurity are permitted to enter the life, for such things disqualify men from being sons of God. To enter into such an intimate relationship with God, believers must experience both the continual cleansing power of God and continual growth in Christian character. Fellowship with the world belongs only to those who are estranged from God.

Dearly beloved. Men are to reflect the loving character of God in relations with other children of the household of faith. True religion always stimulates tenderness of heart.

Cleanse ourselves. Men are unable to cleanse themselves, for there is no power inherent in man to put away sin (Rom. 7:22–24). The believer can be made holy only by letting God work in and through him (Phil. 2:12, 13; cf. 1 Peter 1:22). The Christian must make use of God’s appointed means for cleansing. God awakens the will in order that men may use it. The armor of Christ is available for all Christians, but theirs is the responsibility for putting it on (Eph. 6:10, 11). God’s power and grace are ineffective in one who has an altogether passive mind and will. God is with the one who fights “the good fight of faith,” and will bring him victory (1 Tim. 6:12; see on Rom. 8:37).

Filthiness. Or, “pollution,” “contamination,” “defilement.” As this admonition applies to the flesh, it refers to all those kinds of sin that require the various avenues of the flesh for their commission. As it applies to the spirit, it refers to sins of the mind, such as evil thinking, pride, and ambition. See on Mark 7:15, 23; 2 Cor. 10:4, 5.

Perfecting. Gr. *epiteleō*, “to bring to a consummation,” “to bring to a goal.” Paul here speaks of present growth, which will eventually reach its goal.

Holiness. See on Matt. 5:48; 2 Peter 3:18. Sanctification is a lifetime work, something not accomplished by any single act or at any point of time in this life. Two stages of the Christian life are indicated. The first is justification, or the cleansing and putting on of the new man “created in ... holiness” (Eph. 4:24). The second is sanctification, or the continued development of the new man to the point of perfection. The first, God alone can bring about, with man’s consent, repentance, and acceptance. With the second, God and man cooperate together throughout the lifetime of the believer (Phil. 3:12–14).

Justification is the gateway to holiness. It includes the remission of sin, reconciliation, and regeneration. A man must be set right before he can go right. In justification the primary requirement of the believer is faith (Rom. 3:20, 28). This experience occurs at the very threshold of the Christian life, and must be repeated in case of backsliding. The moment a man becomes a partaker of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4) and spiritual life is implanted within him (Rom. 6:4), he is obligated to work in active cooperation with God. The Christian is to cooperate with God by availing himself of the divine resources of grace and power—Bible study and meditation, personal and private prayer, private and public worship, and spiritual exercise through the medium of service for others. The body is linked with the spirit in the work of sanctification (1 Cor. 1:8; Col. 1:28; 1 Thess. 5:23). See on Rom. 3:28; 4:3, 8.

Cooperation with God in the work of sanctification requires unquestioned acceptance of God’s standard of holiness. The original standard is the nature and character of God (Ex. 15:11; Isa. 6:3; Matt. 5:48; 1 Peter 1:15; Rev. 4:8). That man may understand something of His holy character, God has given us His holy law, which is a transcript of His character (Ps. 19:7–10; Rom. 7:12) and delineates the kind of character He would have us develop. As the life is measured day by day by this divine standard, the grace and power of God transform the character of man to resemble His perfect character (see on 2 Cor. 3:18). Thus the image of the Creator, lost when man sinned, is to be restored (Gen. 1:26, 27; 2 Cor. 3:18). The achievement of a Christlike character is a lifelong pursuit. Only when probation closes will the Christian who has conscientiously and consistently aspired to holiness “be holy still” (Rev. 22:11, 12). Many professed Christians come far

short of holiness and true sanctification because they ignore or lightly esteem God's standard of holiness. They are satisfied with a mediocre and halfhearted obedience, and aspire only to the form of godliness, without its power (see on Matt. 7:21–27; 2 Tim. 3:5).

The holiness of which Paul speaks comes only through vital, spiritual contact with God. This contact takes place through communion with God and a study of His Word (John 17:17; 1 Peter 1:22), and by the mediation of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:26; 2 Thess. 2:13).

The fear of God. See on Ps. 19:9. True sanctification takes place in the life of the believer who is ever conscious of being in the presence of God. A holy reverence for God is essential to the perfection of holiness. A consciousness of the divine presence leads to true reverence. As the eye of faith beholds God there is cultivated in the soul an intense hatred of sin and an earnest desire for righteousness. To fear the Lord means to live every moment under the paternal eye of a holy God. The fear of the Lord is the basis of worship, obedience, and holy service.

2. Receive us. That is, make room for us in your hearts. Following the lengthy parenthesis of chs. 6:14 to 7:1, Paul now continues the thought of ch. 6:11–13. Paul appeals to the Corinthians to receive him as their spiritual leader and father (see 1 Cor. 4:15, 16). He states his own deep affection in an earnest entreaty to them to respond in kind. His attitude is one of genuine love, not of condemnation.

Wronged. Paul is evidently thinking specifically of criticism brought against him because of his way of dealing with certain problems. Specifically, some of the members had disapproved of his instructions concerning the moral offender of 1 Cor. 5:1–5, and charged him with wronging the man. To them it seemed unduly severe to treat a church member as Paul directed. But even in this he had acted with love in his heart for the church. In fact, it was his love that made silence impossible (cf. Prov. 27:6).

No man. In the Greek this expression is in the emphatic position. No one in the church of Corinth or elsewhere had come to make such charges as the false leaders in the Corinthian church had brought against him. He had so conducted himself that his integrity was beyond question.

Corrupted. Gr. *phtheirō*, “to corrupt,” “to deprave,” translated “defile” in 1 Cor. 3:17. The word is used of both corrupt doctrine and corrupt morals (2 Cor. 11:3; Jude 10; Rev. 19:2).

Defrauded. Perhaps his opponents had charged Paul with carelessness in connection with the great collection he had been soliciting from all the churches for the poor at Jerusalem (1 Cor. 16:1–3; 2 Cor. 8:1–6, 10–14, 20–24). The refusal of some of the Corinthians to open their hearts to Paul and to accept him was in decided contrast with their free association with false apostles. They had made room in their affections for men who had practiced wrong, corruption, and fraud. Should they not make room for one who had done none of these things?

3. I speak not. Paul seems to have had some misapprehension over the statement of v. 2. He fears that the Corinthians will interpret the implication that they have not received him, and his denial of the charges made against him, as finding fault with, and condemning, them. He denies any such intention. They had treated him shamefully and with base ingratitude, suspicion, and false charges. Yet he neither scolds nor condemns.

I have said before. The declaration of v. 2 is altogether in harmony with his previous protestations of love for them (chs. 1:6; 2:4; 3:2; 6:11–13). The tense of the verb in the Greek implies the consistency of what he had previously said with what he was now saying. Neither his mind nor his feelings on the matter had changed. Paul was never one to feel sorry for himself because of ill treatment he had received. His reaction was always characterized by love (2 Cor. 4:10–15; Eph. 3:13; Phil. 1:7).

Die and live. Paul is ready to die with and for them. He loves them so deeply that he cannot live without them and without their reciprocal affection. Compare the attitude and plea of Moses for Israel (Ex. 32:30–32). The record of the Corinthian church, with its problems and vices, hardly reveals a lovable and desirable church. Naturally speaking, they were not worthy of the love and devotion Paul lavished upon them. Other churches were far more deserving than they, but he loved them nevertheless (ch. 12:15). The sequence of words—“die” before “live”—may imply a reference to the death all believers die when they come to Christ and to the new life in which they rise to walk with Him (2 Cor. 4:11; 6–9). This experience should be sufficient to unite their hearts and lives in eternal devotion to one another (see on Matt. 5:43, 44).

4. Boldness. Gr. *parrēsia* (see on ch. 3:12, where *parrēsia* is rendered “plainness”). The word refers to confidence of mind as well as to verbal expression (Eph. 3:12; 1 Tim. 3:13; Heb. 3:6; 10:35; 1 John 2:28; 3:21; 4:17; 5:14). His pride in them reflects this inward confidence. In 2 Cor. 7:4–16 Paul reaffirms his joy, occasioned by the good report brought by Titus (see on ch. 2:13). Previously, the Corinthians had given every indication of rejecting his counsel and instruction, particularly in the case of the immoral offender. The church was divided, and resentment against Paul prevailed in many hearts. This situation cast a shadow over his spirit. The intensity of his language reflects the depth of his feeling for the Corinthians. Upon receiving news that they were doing the right thing, he was overjoyed. Conversely, news that they were doing the wrong thing occasioned great mental distress. Now, with the coming of Titus, his former deep concern and anxiety are removed. Now he can speak boldly to them from a heart overflowing with happiness.

Exceeding joyful. Literally, “filled up with joy.” Such joy is the antithesis of feeling “pressed out of measure” (ch. 1:8). Now Paul not only felt confidence in the Corinthians, boasted of them, and was comforted by them, he was also filled with superabounding joy. Great was his relief at the evident change in the attitude of at least most of the Corinthians.

Paul’s anxiety over the spiritual well-being of the Corinthian church is the mark of a true minister. There can be no greater pressure on mind or heart than that experienced by those who watch for men’s souls. Conversely, there is no greater joy than that which comes from a wholehearted response to appeals made to encourage right choices and conduct (2 John 4; 3 John 3, 4). In the course of his ministry the ambassador for Christ must warn, rebuke, counsel, point out sin, and warn of judgment, as well as comfort and inspire.

5. Into Macedonia. See ch. 2:12, 13.

We were troubled. Paul resumes the narrative from which he has digressed since ch. 2:13. No church that Paul had founded gave him so much cause for anxiety and suffering as that at Corinth. Much of this was due to the false apostles (see on ch. 11:22), who had followed Paul to Corinth and deliberately set about to destroy his work, to discredit his

apostleship, to ridicule his gospel and his person (ch. 10:10–12), to assail his character, and to charge him with mishandling money, with cowardice and insincerity, with usurpation of authority. They may also have sought to impose certain ritual requirements on the Gentile converts, contrary to the decision of the church (cf. Acts 15:1–5; 19–24; Gal. 2:1–8).

Furthermore, the membership at Corinth was divided into four factions (1 Cor. 1:10–12). In addition, one of the members was guilty of the most despicable immorality (1 Cor. 5:1–5), and the church had failed to deal with him. Some were guilty of going to law with their brethren in pagan courts (1 Cor. 6:1–8). Some had debased the Lord's Supper, and were guilty of desecrating this sacred service (1 Cor. 11:20–30). Some had manifested a false zeal for spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 14:1, 2, 39, 40).

In spite of all this, Paul did not wish to relinquish his claim to being their spiritual father. He had founded the church at Corinth on his Second Missionary Journey (Acts 18:1–11), and ever since had labored earnestly for them by letter and through personal representatives.

Without were fighting. Thus Paul refers to the struggles listed in greater detail in ch. 11:23–28; cf. ch. 4:8–10.

Within were fears. That is, uncertainty as to how things would work out. This does not mean that Paul suffered abject fear, as he makes plain in ch. 4:8–10.

6. God, that comforteth. Paul had suffered a thousand physical perils and persecutions (chs. 4:8–12; 6:4–10; 11:24–27), but had always considered these things a privilege and a joy (Rom. 8:18, 35–39). It was not these things that had crushed Paul's spirit, but his vicarious sufferings for his children in the faith. It was his capacity for loving the Corinthians so deeply that made it possible for him to suffer so keenly on their behalf.

The coming of Titus. See on ch. 2:13.

7. By his coming. The return of Titus relieved Paul of fear for his personal safety. Travel then was often fraught with danger.

He was comforted. Apparently Titus had shared Paul's concern for the situation at Corinth, and his rejoicing accordingly meant more to Paul than would otherwise have been the case.

Earnest desire. That is, for a visit from Paul, when they could prove their love to him in person, expressing in word and deed the love that was in their hearts for him. In Rom. 1:11; Phil. 1:8; 1 Thess. 3:6; 2 Tim. 1:4, the same Greek word expresses such a desire.

Mourning. When the Corinthians realized the suffering and sorrow they had caused Paul they lamented and repented.

Fervent mind. Literally, "zeal," that is, for Paul. Reference is probably not so much to zeal in following Paul's instructions as to rallying to Paul's side in the controversy.

I rejoiced the more. Upon learning how readily the Corinthians had received his letter, how warmly they welcomed Titus, how promptly they carried out his instructions, how concerned they were about him, and how eagerly they sought to make things right with him, Paul was overcome with joy. Repeatedly he speaks of being comforted and consoled (chs. 1:4; 7:6, 7, 13). Three things in particular revealed the favorable effect of the letter and of Titus' visit. In each of the three staccato phrases the pronoun is emphatic, indicating to the Corinthians that they had provided the comfort and joy of which Paul speaks.

8. Made ... sorry. Gr. *lupeō*, “to make sad,” “to cause grief” (cf. v. 2). The former letter of which Paul speaks had been one of stern rebuke for the evils that prevailed and were tolerated at Corinth. That former letter had accomplished its purpose (see on vs. 7, 11).

A letter. That is, 1 Corinthians (see p. 822).

Repent. Gr. *metamelomai*, “regret.” Apparently after sending that previous letter Paul had questioned the wisdom of writing it, uncertain as to whether he had done the right thing, whether he had expressed himself in the best way, whether his words reflected the right spirit, and whether he would be misunderstood. Paul felt the anxiety most people would feel under similar circumstances. What he had done was not wrong in any way, but he had serious misgivings as to whether it would accomplish the objective he had in view. An open break between Paul and the Corinthians appeared almost inevitable. There was the possibility that they might repudiate his apostolic authority and spiritual leadership altogether. The effect upon other churches of such a course of action on the part of so important a church as that at Corinth, would be disastrous. The cause of God among the Gentiles was at stake.

The same epistle. Or, 1 Corinthians (see p. 822).

9. Now I rejoice. To inflict pain upon the Corinthians or to cause them grief was a matter of regret to Paul, but he took comfort in the thought that the pain and grief were only temporary. Furthermore, all this had led to genuine repentance on the part of the majority. Hesitancy to impose even the least distress upon others, except where there is absolute need, is one mark of a true minister. Those whose burden is to wound or to inflict injury upon the flock or the shepherds to the flock by sharp words and a hostile attitude, reveal the character of wolves.

Repentance. Gr. *metanoia*, literally, “a change of mind.” The word translated “repent” (*metamelomai*) in v. 8 signifies mere regret. In Matt. 27:3 it signifies shallow, false repentance, or remorse. It means reflecting upon one’s sins with a keen sense of regret but without any softened feelings or the real change of attitude that marks the true penitent. On the other hand, *metanoia*, the word here used, specifically denotes a change of mind, and implies that the change is for the better and produces good results (Matt. 12:41; Mark 1:15; Luke 11:32; Acts 3:19; 26:20; Heb. 12:17; Rev. 2:5; etc.).

A reformation of the life is an infinitely more decisive test of the value of repentance than the depth of one’s grief. It was the keynote of the preaching of John the Baptist, of Jesus, and of the apostles (Matt. 3:2, 8, 11; 17; Mark 2:17; Acts 5:31; Rom. 2:4; 2 Tim. 2:25). True repentance makes the angels sing with joy (Luke 15:7). See on 2 Cor. 7:10.

After a godly manner. See on v. 10.

Receive damage. Gr. *zēmioō*, “to sustain damage,” “to receive injury,” “to suffer loss.” Great profit had come to the church from accepting and acting upon the counsel set forth in Paul’s former epistle; loss would have been incurred only from rejecting that counsel. Sorrow “after a godly manner” brought gain; the “sorrow of the world” (v. 10) would have resulted in loss.

10. Godly sorrow. Literally, “according to God,” that is, in the way prescribed by, or acceptable to, God. This is not sorrow at being found out or in anticipation of being punished. It is genuine sorrow for sin, repentance of it, separation from it, and

determination henceforth to resist, by the grace of Christ, the temptation that led to it (see on Matt. 5:3; 1 John 1:9). Embarrassment occasioned by exposure, fear of the possibility of exposure, injured pride, or even profound regret over what has happened—none of this is “godly sorrow.” In “godly sorrow” there is recognition and admission that one has wronged God and his fellow men, adequate effort to right the wrong, and a reorientation of the life with the purpose of avoiding a repetition of the same mistakes. This entire process is possible only by virtue of the grace of Christ, made operative in the mind and the life by the Holy Spirit. True sorrow for sin is the result of recognizing one’s accountability to God for his conduct, and is possible only when that relationship is acknowledged. Perhaps the supreme illustration of the difference between true and false sorrow for sin lies in the contrast between Peter and Judas during the trial of Jesus. Both felt bitter remorse, but with the one there was true sorrow for sin, which led to a new life in Christ; with the other there was only sorrow for the consequences, which led to utter despair and then suicide.

Repentance ... repented. Gr. *metanoia* ... *metamelomai* (see on v. 9). The use of these two words for repentance in one sentence makes a clear distinction between them. The translation, “a repentance ... not to be regretted” accurately reflects the meaning.

Sorrow of the world. Worldly sorrow consists of regret for the consequences of the sin rather than for the sin itself, and at being discredited before the world and worldly friends (1 Sam. 15:30). Worldly sorrow plays only upon the surface of the problem. It mounts no higher than the man himself, and his own feelings. It leads to future regret and to deeper distress. It fills the mind with discontent, the heart with resentment and chagrin. It embitters and shortens life. A person who truly repents will never regret having done so. Indeed, the “sorrow of the world” often compounds misery by goading a man into further folly. It leads to ruin and to death (Gen. 4:12; 1 Sam. 31:3–6; 2 Sam. 17:23; Matt. 27:3–5).

11. Ye sorrowed. The “fruits meet for repentance” (Matt. 3:8) brought forth by the Corinthians were proof that they had truly repented. Interpreting Titus’ report of their sorrow, Paul commends them for seven specific aspects of their repentance. These seven express a complete reversal of attitude.

Carefulness. Gr. *spoudē*, “haste,” “earnestness,” “diligence.” Whereas the Corinthians had hitherto been reluctant to act decisively, they now exerted themselves with all diligence to deal with sin and to make wrongs right. Those who have truly repented will proceed with due carefulness, diligence, and watchfulness. It has been suggested that the next six items are paired, the first pair referring to the attitude of the Corinthian church toward themselves, the second, to their attitude toward Paul, and the third, to their attitude toward the immoral offender of 1 Cor. 5:1–5.

Yea. The repetition of this word lends emphasis to each succeeding point.

Clearing. Gr. *apologia*, “a verbal defense” (cf. Acts 25:16; Phil. 1:7, 17; 2 Tim. 4:16). The phrase “of yourselves” was supplied by the translators. The Corinthians were eager to let it be known that they now disapproved of their former attitude. They now realized that their previous tolerance, and even defense, of the offender had implicated them in his guilt.

Indignation. Probably toward themselves for their former attitude, toward the immoral person, and toward some who may still have supported him. One mark of true

repentance is a righteous indignation toward sin. Intense hatred of unrighteousness accompanies a strong love of righteousness. However, genuine righteous indignation against sin is always accompanied by an equally strong love for the erring one.

Fear. Perhaps the Corinthians feared Paul might not believe their repentance genuine, and that he would continue to take a stern attitude toward them (cf. 1 Cor. 4:21; 2 Cor. 13:1 ff.).

Vehement desire. Or, “longing,” probably for the restoration of a spirit of fellowship and mutual understanding with Paul.

Zeal. That is, in dealing with the immoral offender as Paul had recommended (1 Cor. 5:1–5). Hitherto they had manifested little if any concern about the matter, thus giving the impression that they did not consider it particularly serious.

Revenge. Or, “punishment,” that is, of the immoral offender (see chs. 2:6, 7; 7:12).

Clear in this matter. Paul accepted without question the change of heart in Corinth, as reported by Titus, and gave his approval to the course of action taken by the church in dealing with the offender.

12. I wrote. See on ch. 2:3.

Not for his cause. In writing the former letter Paul had shown his great concern for the good name of the church. He feared that the heathen would look with scorn upon Christianity, and that the Judaizers would point to this brazen case of incest as the result of his ministry. Now that the church had dealt firmly with the offender and he had repented, and the good name of the church had thus been protected, Paul’s concern turned to the spiritual welfare of the individuals concerned (ch. 2:6–8).

That had done the wrong. That is, the immoral offender of 1 Cor. 5:1–5.

That suffered wrong. Probably the husband of the woman involved.

Our care for you. At the time Paul wrote the former letter his chief anxiety had been for the church as a whole, for its spiritual welfare and for its reputation among unbelievers.

Purity among the early Christians was a sure mark by which they might be distinguished from pagans. Immorality was not considered evil by the heathen, and was often an integral part of religious worship. Paul expected the churches to give a positive testimony to the fact that they lived above all such practices. The living witness of the church today is closely related to the purity of its members.

13. Therefore we were comforted. That is, as a result of the “godly sorrow” experienced by the Corinthians (vs. 11, 12).

In your comfort. Textual evidence attests (cf. p. 10) the reading “in addition [or “yea”] to our [own] comfort,” with the pronoun “our” instead of “your,” and the word translated “yea” transposed from the following clause to this phrase. The passage would then read, “Therefore we were comforted. And in addition to our own comfort we joyed the more exceedingly for the joy of Titus.” This reading is confirmed by the context (vs. 11–13). As v. 11 makes clear, the Corinthians were now in a state of “comfort.”

Exceedingly the more. The Greek is most emphatic. Happy as Paul was at the factual report of the spiritual condition now prevailing in the church at Corinth, he was infinitely more pleased by the enthusiasm of Titus, who had been there in person. Paul had dispatched Titus under a cloud of apprehension and overwhelming anxiety. The ominous news he had received gave him every reason for concern. But the Corinthians had received Titus with such obvious affection as to convince him of the genuineness of their

repentance and of their firm loyalty to Paul. The buoyant joy of Titus overflowed into the heart of the elder apostle. See also on v. 14.

Refreshed. Literally, “set at rest,” or “given rest.” Compare the same word as used in Matt. 11:28; Mark 6:31; Rev. 14:13; etc.

By you all. Perhaps a further reason for joy is implied by the large number—almost “all”—who had proved penitent and loyal. That a small minority had not reacted favorably appears to be the import of ch. 10:2.

14. If I have boasted. All of the good things Paul had formerly told Titus about the Corinthians were now proved true, as confirmed by the abounding enthusiasm of Titus as he made his report. Paul had no further need to fear that his former fond hopes were premature. The Corinthians had more than lived up to his expectations. He had spoken the truth when rebuking them for serious faults, but he also spoke the truth when he enumerated their good qualities. All that he had said was now vindicated.

15. Inward affection. Literally, “bowels” (see Phil. 1:8; Philemon 12; 1 John 3:17; see on 2 Cor. 6:12). Here Paul refers to the tender affection of Titus for the Corinthians. His recent visit had made him love them the more. In this bond of fellowship Paul sees the seal of reconciliation between himself and the Corinthian believers (see ch. 7:16).

Fear and trembling. See on v. 11. This is another of Paul’s favorite phrases (Eph. 6:5; Phil. 2:12; etc.). Titus had been received, not with hostility or threatened rejection, as might have been expected, but with a full measure of respect. The Corinthians had accepted him as a messenger sent by God. They had also made evident their earnest eagerness to please him, and felt a holy fear lest they might in any way fail to measure up to what was expected of them. Godly sorrow breaks down human pride.

16. Confidence in you. Or, “courage concerning you.” This verse is considered by many authorities to be a transition or link between all that he has written in the previous chapters and what is now to follow. These words fittingly dismiss all the mistakes and misunderstandings of the past and express true reconciliation. At the same time they provide a fitting introduction to the subject of the great collection for the poor Christians in Judea, which Paul was vigorously promoting among the Gentile churches.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1AA 201; CD 49; CT 402; FE 125; GC 474; ML 267; PP 182; SL 30; Te 64; TM 448; 1T 339, 340, 440, 486, 589, 619, 663; 2T 66, 360, 375, 405, 441, 447, 453, 592; 3T 245, 475; 4T 33, 125, 258; 5T 13, 92, 440; 7T 251, 258

1–16FE 534

4 GW 266

5–10AA 324

8–13MH 167

9–11GC 462

10 PP 557; SC 38; TM 223, 448; 3T 467

11 AA 325; SC 39; TM 449; 5T 640

16 MH 167; RC 64; TM 514

CHAPTER 8

1 *He stirreth them up to a liberal contribution for the poor saints at Jerusalem, by the example of the Macedonians, 7 by commendation of their former forwardness, 9 by the example of Christ, 14 and by the spiritual profit that shall redound to themselves thereby: 16 commending to them the integrity and willingness of Titus, and those other brethren,*

who upon his request, exhortation, and commendation, were purposely come to them for this business.

1. Brethren. Chapters 8 and 9 constitute a new section, which deals with the collection for the poor in Judea (see on 1 Cor. 16:1). The word “brethren” strikes the keynote of the new section. Brotherly love among Christians provides the true motive for giving and sharing. In 2 Cor. 8:1–5 Paul calls to the attention of the Corinthians the example of generosity set by the churches of Macedonia, whence Paul writes this epistle.

Paul had previously acquainted the Corinthians with the relief problem in Judea and his plan concerning the great collection (1 Cor. 16:1–4; cf. Gal. 2:9, 10). When Paul had first introduced the proposal, about a year earlier (2 Cor. 8:10), they had manifested great zeal, of which Paul later boasted to others (ch. 9:3, 4). But their zeal had waned, and at the time Paul wrote this epistle they were far behind in making good on their promises (ch. 9:4, 5). This had probably been due to the period of spiritual declension, but now they had made full repentance. Their conversion being genuine, Paul rightly assumed that they would be eager to demonstrate their love in a practical way. One mark of genuine conversion is a willingness to make personal sacrifices for others who may be in need.

We do you to wit. A polite, archaic expression meaning, “we wish to make known to you.”

Grace of God. The liberality of the Macedonian churches came about in spite of their “deep poverty” (v. 2), and this testified to “the grace of God” at work in their hearts. Paul traces their generosity to its true source, and points out to the Corinthians that it is divine grace that inspires generous and sacrificial giving. Christians are said to be “stewards of the manifold grace of God” (1 Peter 4:10). Furthermore, by the grace of God, Christians are stewards of the things they possess. The disposition to give to others is a divinely inspired talent, and thus a special evidence of divine grace. A liberal spirit seeks spontaneously for an outlet in acts of benevolence. It does not need urging.

Churches of Macedonia. Paul exalted these as worthy of emulation. They were all founded by him—Philippi, Thessalonica, Beroea, and perhaps others. The church at Philippi was particularly noteworthy for its generosity. It was the only church on record that contributed to Paul’s personal needs as a self-supporting missionary (2 Cor. 11:9; cf. Phil. 4:10, 11, 14–18). He received no financial support from either the church at Jerusalem or the one at Antioch (1 Cor. 9:4–7, 14, 15). The church at Beroea was also of a high and noble character (Acts 17:10–12). Liberal contributions came from Macedonia and Achaia (Rom. 15:26).

2. Trial. Or, “test.” The word is used especially of testing the quality of metals. The Macedonian Christians suffered more than ordinary affliction, yet their faith and experience proved genuine. They suffered severely from persecution (Acts 17:5–9; 1 Thess. 1:6–8; 2:14; 3:3–5; 2 Thess. 1:4–6). One of the great tests of a triumphant Christian experience is to know joy, peace, and love in the midst of affliction (Matt. 5:11, 12; Rom. 5:3; 12:12; 1 Peter 2:20, 21).

Abundance of their joy. Persecution and poverty would both tend to repress the spirit and practice of liberality, but the abundance of their joy combined with the depth of their poverty is represented as inspiring generosity. Such was the spirit of the early church (Acts 4:32–37).

Deep poverty abounded. Figuratively speaking, the poverty of the Macedonians was such that they had to scrape the bottom of a barrel that was all but empty. Yet in spite of

utter destitution they overflowed abundantly with help for others in need. The measure of Paul's praise of the Macedonian Christians was not for the actual amount given, though it was doubtless considerable. It was the spirit that prompted the giving to which Paul pointed as worthy of emulation (see on Mark 12:41–44).

The abysmal poverty of Macedonia at this time was due to various factors. Three wars had desolated the area: the first, between Julius Caesar and Pompey, the second, between the triumvirs and Brutus and Cassius following Caesar's assassination, and the third, between Octavian and Antony (see Vol. V, p. 28, 35, 37). So desperate was the condition of the Macedonians that they had petitioned the emperor Tiberius for a reduction of taxes. Furthermore, most of the early Christians came from the poorer classes of society.

Liberality. Gr. *haplotēs*, “singleness [of heart],” “sincerity,” “freedom from pretense” (2 Cor. 11:3; Eph. 6:5; Col. 3:22; etc.). Here it denotes that openness of mind and heart which manifested itself in great liberality. It refers, not so much to what they gave, but to the quality of heart that is the basis of all true giving and that results in spontaneous self-sacrifice for the welfare of others.

3. To their power. In the Greek vs. 3–6 constitute one sentence, which explains further the quality of liberality mentioned in vs. 1, 2. The Macedonians gave beyond their ability and means. Their tendency was not to give too little, but too much. They gave spontaneously and without being urged or even reminded, as it seemed the Corinthians now needed to be. It was sufficient that the Macedonians know of the need that existed. They requested the privilege of being allowed to share in the ministry of being allowed to share in the ministry to the poor saints at Jerusalem. Their spirit exhibited complete self-dedication and self-sacrifice to the work of the Lord.

4. Intreaty. Gr. *paraklēsis* (see on Matt. 5:4).

Fellowship. The Macedonians considered the need of their brethren in Jerusalem as if it were their own. For the believers in Macedonia, to belong to the great Christian family meant to have common cause with their fellow Christians in sacrifice, in suffering, in sharing poverty, and in helping others. To the extent of their ability, and beyond, they were ready to have all things—even poverty—in common (see Acts 2:44; 4:32). Their spiritual, moral, social, and material resources were available to others, ready to be drawn upon in a common cause. In fact, they considered it a favor to be permitted to do so.

5. Not as we hoped. Rather, they had exceeded Paul's fondest expectations. They looked upon the collection, not as a duty, but as a privilege. They made the cause their own.

Gave their own selves. The Macedonian gift came from consecrated and devoted hearts. They gave themselves, and their gifts automatically followed. They gave themselves *in* their gifts (cf. Prov. 23:26). The Christian who gives God his heart keeps nothing back. The example of the Macedonians to the Corinthians and to Christians of all time illustrates the great truth that “the gift without the giver is bare.” He who gives himself without reservation will not hesitate to give his possessions also.

Will of God. They permitted God to direct their lives, and His will became theirs. Here was evidence of thorough conversion.

6. Desired. Gr. *parakaleō* (see on Matt. 5:4). Titus was a Greek (Gal. 2:1, 3), and was one of Paul's most trusted friends (Titus 1:4). Paul had sent Titus to deal with the

difficult Corinthian problem, and his mission had proved successful beyond expectation (see on 2 Cor. 7:13). He had won the confidence of the Corinthian believers, and had begun a collection among them for the poor in Judea. The plan now was for him to return to Corinth with this epistle and to complete the collection (see ch. 9:5; cf. ch. 12:18).

As he had begun. That is, Titus had set in operation the plan now in progress at Corinth.

The same grace. That is, the collection, which reflected the grace of God operating in the hearts of the givers (see on vs. 1, 2).

7. Ye abound. In vs. 7–15 Paul gives directions concerning the collection in Corinth. He appeals to the principle that the Christian life is an abundant life (John 10:10).

In every thing. A symmetrical Christian experience is a harmonious development of life and service, of inward graces and an outward expression of them. Any aspect of the Christian life cultivated at the expense of other aspects may become a blemish. Compare 1 Cor. 1:5. The Corinthians excelled in so many ways that it would be inconsistent to neglect the grace of charity.

The grace. That is, the collection (see on vs. 1, 2).

8. Not by commandment. Compare 1 Cor. 7:6, 12, 25. The collection is to be completed by their own free choice, not because Paul requires it of them. Such a command would have expressed doubt of their willingness to comply on the basis of love, and would have nullified the principle that only freewill offerings are acceptable to God (see on Mark 12:41–44).

Forwardness of others. That is, the readiness of the Macedonian believers, out of their comparative poverty, to respond to the plea to assist the needy at Jerusalem.

To prove. The noble example of the Macedonians becomes a divinely appointed test for the Corinthians. Paul did not appeal to pride, vanity, selfish feeling, or a spirit of rivalry and competition in order to urge the Corinthians to do something that more worthy motives would not lead them to do. The emulation of noble lives is never an appeal to rivalry, but it does test the depth and genuineness of one's love and devotion. This elevated principle of comparison provides a valuable means of spiritual discipline.

Sincerity of your love. See on ch. 7:11, 16. Paul did not doubt their sincerity, but knew that the collection provided an ideal opportunity to demonstrate the genuineness of their love.

9. Ye know. Paul had fully declared to them the grace of Christ, and they knew it by experience with it, as the Greek makes evident, not simply as a tenet of belief. They had tasted, and thus they knew that the Lord is gracious. In fact, they themselves constituted living evidence of it. The grace of Christ must control the heart and will. It is never effective so long as it remains an intellectual concept only. For that matter, no divine truth is known merely by an intellectual understanding of it (see Matt. 16:17; John 6:45; 16:14; 1 Cor. 2:4; 12:3). The only man to whom the Word of God is truth is he who is taught and convinced by the Spirit. The riches we receive through the poverty of Christ come through spiritual illumination of the life.

Grace. See on Rom. 3:24. The supreme acts of Christ, His incarnation and crucifixion, are attributed to grace only here and in Rom. 5:15; Gal. 1:6. These acts constituted the supreme manifestations of divine love and condescension. Paul here contrasts the supreme sacrifice of Christ with man's incomparably infinitesimal acts of charity.

Lord Jesus Christ. See on Matt. 1:1; John 1:38.

He was rich. An allusion to Christ's preincarnate existence (see John 17:5; see on Phil. 2:6, 7; see Additional Note on John 1). Since He was Creator and King, the universe was His (John 1:1, 2; Col. 1:15–17), but His earthly life was ever one of extreme poverty (Matt. 8:20). His riches consisted of the nature and attributes of deity, of countless millions of worlds, of the adoration and loyalty of multitudes of angels.

Became poor. Gr. *ptōcheuō*, “to be [extremely] poor,” “to be a beggar.” For comment on *ptōchos*, the related noun, see on Mark 12:42. The verb tense here used points to the act of becoming “poor”—the incarnation. Christ so completely emptied Himself that He retained nothing of the riches that were once His. He took upon Himself human nature and became subject to the limitations of humanity. He became poor to the point where of Himself He could do nothing (John 5:19, 20; see Vol. V, pp. 917, 918).

Might be rich. With the coming of sin, man lost his home, his domain, his character, and even life itself. By nature, he now spends his life seeking false riches (see on Isa. 55:2; John 6:27). Eternal poverty awaits those who do not lay up treasure for themselves in heaven (see on Matt. 19:21; Luke 12:21). Christ came to deliver man from his poverty, which results from seeking false riches (see 3T 401). In and through Christ men are able to discern the true value of things, and receive the privilege of becoming “rich” in Christ Jesus. In Him they inherit all things (Matt. 6:20; Rom. 8:17, 32; 1 Cor. 1:5; Eph. 1:3–5, 10, 11, 18, 19; 2:6, 7; see on Matt. 6:33).

10. My advice. Paul speaks not “by commandment” (see on v. 8). He knew that an expression of sound judgment would carry much more weight with the Corinthians than a peremptory order. The church had already committed itself to the offering, and needed only encouragement to revive and carry out its good intentions. A command would have been entirely out of place.

This is expedient. Paul's counsel was that they should no longer delay completing what they had begun a year before. It was desirable for their own sake that they should not do so. To delay would be detrimental to their own Christian experience, and would leave them open to criticism. A vow made to God cannot be repudiated without involving a man's Christian integrity (Eccl. 5:4–5).

A year ago. About a year had passed since the Corinthian believers had set out to raise funds for the church at Jerusalem (ch. 9:2). This noble project had evidently been interrupted by the contention and strife occasioned by the false apostles. Now that the majority had reaffirmed their loyalty to Paul the project could proceed once more. See on ch. 11:22.

11. Perform. Literally, “complete,” that is, what they had already promised to do.

Readiness to will. A willing mind makes even a little acceptable, but to do less than one is able to do is a denial of willingness. A generous will is good in itself, but alone it is not enough. The will must be embodied in deeds, if our best desires and energies are to give solidity and strength to the character. It is good to cherish the ideal of charity, but the ideal must find practical expression. Faith and love, as ideals, never feed the hungry or clothe the naked (James 2:14–20). “Readiness,” then, is a spontaneous disposition and attitude of mind to serve God and one's fellow men. It has no need of being urged or driven forward by the importunity of others.

12. Willing mind. It is the sincere willingness of the mind that determines the acceptableness of the gift to God. With God the question ever is, How much did you

heart give? If the heart gives nothing, what the hands may offer is without value before God. God neither needs nor cares for our money, nor is He benefited by it. A man may have little or nothing to give, but a willing heart is what sanctifies the gift. A man's best efforts may fail, due to circumstances beyond his control, or his desires to work for God may remain unfulfilled for lack of opportunity. But that need not cause him to stand condemned before Heaven. For comment on the basis upon which eternal rewards are to be meted out see on Matt. 20:1–16; 25:14–46. It is not the number of talents a man may have, but the devotion and faithfulness with which he improves them, that counts with God.

13. *Ye burdened.* Paul did not intend that the Corinthians should carry more than their share of the burden, to spare churches elsewhere the need of doing their fair share.

14. *An equality.* Paul does not here refer to an equality of property or goods, but to a proportionate equality of effort. In their present state of material prosperity the Corinthians were able to do much more than the Macedonians in their state of want (see on vs. 1–5).

Your want. There might come a time when the Corinthians would be in want and others would have to bear a larger share of the burden. The Scriptures recognize the right of private property and the right that all contributions shall be voluntary, but it also condemns the selfish and heartless neglect of the poor and needy. If one Christian gives a large sum, this does not relieve others from the obligation to contribute what they can. Those who have less of this earth's goods are not to excuse themselves from doing their proportionate part to assist others (cf. Eph. 4:28; 2 Thess. 3:12).

15. *Gathered much.* To illustrate the principle of equalization set forth in v. 14, Paul alludes to the gathering of the manna in the wilderness (Ex. 16:17, 18). Irrespective of the amount actually gathered, each person had sufficient for his needs. The same principle is to operate in the Christian church, not by miraculous intervention but through the exercise of the spirit of love for one's brethren. It is the will of God that each shall have a share of the material things of life adequate to his needs. It is also God's will that those who, because of natural ability and opportunity, gather more of this world's goods should not selfishly enjoy their superabundance, but share it with those in need (see on Luke 12:13–34). They are stewards, not outright owners, of the earthly benefits they have gathered, and are to use these for the welfare of their fellow men (Ps. 112:9; Matt. 25:14–46). In this way the evils that result from superabundant wealth and from poverty may both be prevented.

16. *Thanks be to God.* Paul thus begins another section of his letter. In vs. 1–15 he has set before the Corinthians the noble example of the Macedonians and enunciated the true principles of Christian benevolence. He now proceeds to outline the practical details to be followed in completing the collection.

Put. Literally, “gives,” that is, keeps on giving, or continually gives. There is no danger that the zeal of Titus will wane.

The same earnest care. First, Paul commends Titus to the church at Corinth, expressing gratitude that Titus shares his own interest in the proposed collection. They can count on the diligent application of his mind and heart to the task at hand.

The impulse to self-sacrificing enterprises for the practical and spiritual welfare of humanity is pre-eminently Christian. The work of charity and philanthropy in the world is essentially Christian in its origin and spirit. Such a spirit does not originate in the human

heart, for it is naturally selfish. It is part of the great work of the church to take men out of themselves and inspire them with a genuine concern for the welfare of others. Christians may well be grateful to God for the church, which inspires its members not merely to contribute to the needs of other members but also to minister to their needs (Matt. 20:26, 28). Titus would thus confer upon the Corinthians a true favor, in stimulating them to generous deeds. Instead of seeking to avoid appeals to give for the salvation and welfare of others, Christians should thank God for such opportunities.

17. He accepted the exhortation. Titus had responded gladly to Paul's appeal to go to Corinth in the hope of restoring the church to its former state of peace and unity.

Forward. Or, "earnest." Paul's words express a double meaning. Though the offering was initiated by Paul, Titus was fully in accord in this project and shared his concern for its success. The urging was not exclusively Paul's. Evidently Titus had already volunteered to go on this mission to Corinth.

He went. Paul speaks of Titus' impending departure for Corinth as if he had already gone—from the viewpoint of the Corinthians in reading this letter. This characteristic Greek mode of expression clearly points to Titus as the bearer of the second epistle.

18. Have sent. That is, are sending (see on v. 17).

The brother. Paul entrusted the work of the collection in Achaia to three men, Titus and two others whose names are not given. All three enjoyed the confidence of the churches. This arrangement was designed to facilitate the collection and to protect all concerned with the collection against suspicion of appropriating funds thus collected to their own use. In view of the fact that a minority at Corinth still opposed Paul, it was better that he not collect the funds personally. Undoubtedly a considerable sum was collected, and a full report could thus be made back to the churches, both as to the amount given and as to its delivery at Jerusalem (see vs. 20, 21). Paul knew his opponents would find fault with him if they could. The minister of the gospel is specifically counseled to be discreet in his attitude toward money (1 Tim. 3:3; 1 Peter 5:2).

Whose praise. This brother had proved an effective laborer "in the gospel," and should be respected as a worthy colaborer of Paul and Titus.

19. Chosen. Gr. *cheirotoneō* (see on Acts 14:23). Although the word means, literally, "to stretch out the hand," and thus "to elect," its usage leaves uncertain the manner in which this companion of Titus was appointed.

Travel. That is, to Jerusalem, in company with Paul and others, to deliver to the brethren there the funds thus collected in Macedonia and in Greece.

Grace. As in vs. 4–7, the word here refers to the charitable enterprise of assisting the poor at Jerusalem, which was an expression of the grace of God (v. 1).

To the glory. The proposed collection for the saints at Jerusalem would lead men to glorify God. Those at Jerusalem would praise Him that the gospel had led the Gentiles to take so practical an interest in their needy condition, and the Gentiles would find joy in ministering to the needs of their fellow Christians.

Your ready mind. Textual evidence attests (cf. p. 10) the reading "our readiness of mind," or "our zeal." In addition to the good that would come to the poor saints at Jerusalem and to the Gentile churches in thus making provision for their needs, the project would also demonstrate to Jewish Christians in Judea that in his labors for the Gentiles Paul had not forgotten them. The project would bind the hearts of Jew and

Gentile together and tend to unite them in one fellowship. This would help to break down “the middle wall of partition” (Eph. 2:14) that separated them.

20. Avoiding this. Or, “taking precautions about this.” Paul sought to avoid any basis for the charge that he was making a personal profit from the project. Strict honesty may not always be sufficient in money matters, where the least carelessness may become the occasion for criticism. The Christian minister, especially, must exercise scrupulous care in handling money matters (cf. 1 Tim. 3:3; 1 Peter 5:2).

Blame. Or, “reproach,” here implying that someone might charge that Paul had not been strictly honest with the funds entrusted to him.

Abundance. Or, “liberality.” The collection had every appearance of proving successful, taking into account what Paul anticipated from the comparatively well-to-do Corinthian church. The Corinthians were popularly considered wealthy people, as reflected in the proverb, “Not every man can pretend to live in Corinth.”

21. Honest. That is, good, admirable, beautiful, meaning what looks and is honorable. Here it denotes the conduct of one who possesses the excellence of love and thus enjoys a good reputation before others, one held in high esteem for his admirable conduct. Christians are not only called to be holy, honest, and pure, but “also in the sight of men” are to be recognized as having the beauty of holiness, honesty, and purity. The true Christian is to exemplify before both God and man a beautiful and attractive way of life (Rom. 12:17; Phil. 4:8; 1 Peter 2:12). This verse is a quotation from the LXX translation of Prov. 3:4.

22. Our brother. It is no more possible to identify this companion of Titus than the one of v. 18. However, some have suggested Tychicus, who was a member of the delegation that accompanied Paul to Jerusalem with the contribution (Acts 20:4). Elsewhere Paul speaks of Tychicus as a “beloved brother and faithful minister” (Eph. 6:21; Col. 4:7). Paul considered Tychicus as one of his most trusted messengers, and later sent him upon various important missions (2 Tim. 4:12; Titus 3:12).

23. Titus. Paul here commends the three men chosen to direct the work of the collection as men of diligence in whom they may have confidence. He invests them with full authority, lest any of the factions at Corinth should be disposed to question their motives. They are all fully accredited and are to be so accepted. Titus is mentioned first, evidently as chairman of the group, and Paul’s personal representative. Titus later eventually filled an important post of leadership in the early Christian church (Titus 1:1–5; 2:15).

Messengers. Literally, “apostles,” or “ones dispatched [on a mission].” This designation invests them with authority equivalent to that of Paul himself (ch. 1:1), so far as the collection is concerned. It does not necessarily confer upon them the permanent title or office of apostle.

Glory of Christ. These three men are to be accorded the utmost respect as personal representatives of Christ. Their commission will redound to the glory of Christ. Paul could have given these men no higher commendation.

24. Shew ye. Paul challenges the Corinthians to measure up to their responsibility to set an example worthy of emulation by Christians elsewhere. The attitude they took, the contribution they made, the treatment they accorded these delegates, would inevitably become known to the other churches. The Corinthians were on public exhibition in this matter of the collection. Their honor as a church was at stake. The only proper response

on their part would be one of wholehearted cooperation with the messengers of Christ and of generosity toward the poor Christians in Judea.

Every church on earth is representative of the kingdom of God, and thus a spectacle to angels and to men (1 Cor. 4:9). No subject of this kingdom has been entrusted with God's gifts or blessings simply for his own use, whether it be truth, personal experience with Christ, or the material blessings of God's providence.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1-5AA 343

1-66T 271

2 3T 413; WM 205

2-55T 734

7 AA 344; MM 184; 3T 392; 5T 271

8, 9 CS 19

9 AA 71, 332, 341, 519; CH 318, 320; COL 393; CS 20, 30, 55, 123, 136, 161, 178, 211, 287; CT 495; DA 88, 417; Ev 240; EW 67; MB 83; MH 105, 501; MM 19, 321; PK 652; SC 79; TM 121, 177; 1T 680; 2T 27, 215, 636, 660; 3T 198, 208, 387, 401, 407, 457, 525, 547; 4T 49, 120, 219, 457, 481, 550, 621, 627; 5T 155, 271, 360, 730; 7T 29, 297; 9T 131, 254; WM 24

11, 12 AA 344

12 COL 328; CS 48, 119; ML 110; MYP 96; Te 113; 2T 282, 667

13 1T 178, 179, 205, 324

13-15PP 295

24 CS 29

CHAPTER 9

3

1 *He yieldeth the reason why, though he knew their forwardness, yet he sent Titus and his brethren beforehand. 6 And he proceedeth in stirring them up to a bountiful alms, as being but a kind of sowing of seed, 10 which shall return a great increase to them, 13 and occasion a great sacrifice of thanksgivings unto God.*

1. Ministering. Here referring still to the offering.

It is superfluous. The line of thought begun in ch. 8:1 continues without interruption. In ch. 9 Paul adds further exhortation concerning the collection for the poor at Jerusalem. Lest the Corinthians feel that Paul dwells at unnecessary length on the subject, he explains the reason for writing so fully about it. Their plans a year ago had been interrupted by dissension and party spirit that had arisen between members in Corinth. In the meantime, by way of encouraging the churches of Macedonia to respond in a similar way, Paul had pointed to the original readiness of the Corinthians to participate in the project. Unless the believers at Corinth should complete the collection without further delay, it would appear to the Macedonians that Paul's boasting to them of the Corinthians was baseless. This verse is a subtle and courteous way both of expressing confidence in their readiness to proceed at once with the collection and of inspiring them to do so, thus vindicating Paul's confidence in them (cf. 1 Thess. 4:9).

³Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (2 Co 6:1). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.

2. Forwardness of your mind. Paul addresses himself to the best element in the Corinthian church, confident that they are thinking rightly about the matter. As a wise Christian leader he takes notice of every favorable sign, in the hope of strengthening what gives promise of success. The wise minister of the gospel will similarly stimulate the best that is in people, whether as individuals or as a group.

I boast of you. See on v. 1.

Achaia. In Roman times southern Greece constituted the province of Achaia, of which Corinth was the capital. There were already several Christian churches in this region, that at Corinth being the principal one. There was also a church at Cenchreae, one of the ports of Corinth (see Rom. 16:1). See The Journeys of Paul.

Your zeal. Paul expresses complete assurance in the Corinthian church as to their part in the offering, and boasts of it as if it were an accomplished fact. They could not go back on their word now without embarrassing themselves and denying all the good things Paul had said concerning them. The appeal to a good example sometimes succeeds when other methods have failed. Many do not believe that they can afford to give, until others in similar circumstances demonstrate their generosity.

3. Have ... sent. That is, am sending (see on ch. 8:17).

The brethren. That is, Titus and two others, not named (see on ch. 8:16–24).

Our boasting. See on v. 1.

4. They of Macedonia. At the time of writing this epistle Paul was on his way to Corinth. Within a few weeks he would see the Corinthians face to face, and spend the winter with them (Acts 20:1–3). Apparently it had already been planned that several of the Macedonian believers should accompany him. On frequent occasions believers escorted him from one city to another (Acts 17:14, 15; Rom. 15:24; 1 Cor. 16:6; see on 2 Cor. 1:16). If the Corinthians were still not ready when the Macedonian representatives arrived, the occasion would be one of embarrassment for all—for Paul, for the Macedonians, and for the Corinthians themselves.

Paul had done everything to assure their success. He had carefully organized and planned the collection. He had pointed to their zeal and interest in order to encourage the Macedonians. He was now sending them further instructions, by letter. And finally, he was dispatching three representatives to assist the Corinthians in bringing the project to completion. After all of this, failure would mean disgrace and humiliation indeed.

That we say not, ye. That is, not to say you yourselves.

Confident boasting. Literally, “confidence of boasting,” though textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the omission of the word “boasting.” The last phrase of the verse would then read “in this confidence.” The basis for Paul’s boasting would be completely shattered should the Corinthians be unprepared when he arrived.

5. Necessary. This word is in the emphatic position in the Greek.

Beforehand. In this verse Paul stresses the importance of completing the collection prior to his arrival. Evidently he feared there might be some procrastination in completing the job. With this verse he brings his tactful, wise, and firm pressure to a climax. It is not simply money that is at stake, or the needs of the poor. It is the spirit and character of the Corinthians, their Christian maturity. True giving is an act of the soul. It awakens the higher manhood within one. It tends to crucify the flesh and the lust of selfishness. It cleanses and purifies the giver from base motives. It is one of the principal avenues to

happiness and mental health. Every true gift given with an eye to God's glory and to the happiness of others will result in blessings to the giver.

Covetousness. That is, a greedy desire to have more. Paul warns the Corinthians against giving grudgingly some small amount, merely to make an impression and gain an advantage. See on Luke 12:15.

6. He which soweth. In the Bible, the figure of sowing and reaping is a very familiar one. The relation between sowing and reaping is natural and just. It is altogether in harmony with the principles of God's government (Prov. 11:24, 25; 19:17; 22:9; Gal. 6:7–10). A good farmer does not sow grudgingly or sparingly, but cheerfully and bountifully, knowing the relationship between sowing and harvest.

Bountifully. The word reveals the elevated and divine nature of Christian liberality. Christian giving is not a sacrifice at all, but preparation for a harvest. God's "unspeakable gift" (v. 15) brought immeasurable blessings to mankind, and to Christ it brought joy as He saw the result of His passion and was satisfied (Isa. 53:11). In the plan of salvation God demonstrated the way to sow, and He guarantees the harvest. Man must choose whether he will reap the blessings that God has in store for him.

7. Purposeth in his heart. This denotes a well-considered decision. Christian benevolence grows out of deliberate choice. A considerable amount of giving is done on the spur of the moment, without that loving, careful thought that adds to a gift the heart of the giver (see on ch. 8:5). Not so with God's great gift of love (John. 3:16; cf. Eph. 3:11). Only that which comes from the spontaneous desire of the heart is acceptable with God (Matt. 6:2–4).

Not grudgingly. Literally, "not out of grief," that is, not reluctantly. Giving that saddens the giver is not true giving. Such a gift goes without the giver, for it is accompanied by the regret men manifest upon the loss of earthly possessions. At no time will a Christian find giving a painful experience. A man who gives in that spirit reaps no benefit from the act. On the other hand, the cheerful giver is a better, a happier, and a more Christlike man for the giving. A grudging giver might as well not give at all, for his spirit and character are utterly opposed to the spirit of Christ, who has freely given us all things (Rom. 8:32).

Of necessity. That is, by being required to give. This may refer to group pressure, which impels a man to give in order to retain his standing with the group, to urgent admonition and personal importunity to participate in church projects, or to the impulse to give in order to compensate for failure to do one's duty in other directions.

God loveth. This statement is almost a literal quotation from the LXX of Prov. 22:9. The supreme quality of God's character is righteous love (1 John 4:7, 8). The supreme honor that can be rendered God by His creatures is the reflection of that love in their lives. This is the most effective way of proclaiming God to the world.

Cheerful. That is, prompt and spontaneous. Of all the Christian duties, none can be discharged with more cheerfulness than giving, particularly to projects designed to advance the kingdom of God on earth. The spirit of liberality is the spirit of Christ; the spirit of selfishness is the spirit of the world and of Satan. The character of the Christian is to give; the character of the worldling is to get.

8. Make all grace abound. Verses 8–11 set forth God's ability and readiness to provide men with a sufficiency of all things, in order that they may, in turn, impart to their fellow men. Note the stress on the word "all" or its equivalent four times in v. 8, to

express the fullness of God's resources. It is God's nature to abound in spiritual gifts and resources. To every Christian, all of God's resources are available to advance the cause of His kingdom (see Mal. 3:10, 11; 1 Cor. 3:21–23; Eph. 3:20). Through the superabundant grace provided by God "all things are possible" (Matt. 19:26).

Sufficiency. Gr. *autarkeia*, "a perfect condition of life in which no aid or support is needed." In the NT the word occurs elsewhere only in Phil. 4:11 and 1 Tim. 6:6, where it is translated, respectively, "content" and "contentment." The Christian use of the word denotes godliness with contentment, complete freedom from dependence upon man as a result of the superabounding resources that come from God. Those actuated by this liberal spirit will ever be abundantly qualified for doing good (see DA 827).

9. It is written. An exact quotation from the LXX of Ps. 112:9. The expression "it is written" is the usual NT formula for introducing a quotation from Scripture. A righteous man is characterized by his sensitivity to the needs of his fellows.

Dispersed. Or, "scattered" (cf. Matt. 12:30). A liberal giver distributes to the poor as a sower scatters seeds.

Poor. Gr. *penēs* (see on Mark 12:42), meaning so poor as to have to work each day to meet the needs of the morrow.

Righteousness. Here the word specifically denotes the giving of alms (see on Matt. 6:1). Christian liberality is one practical evidence of righteousness.

Remaineth for ever. Its effects are permanent, and God will never forget. Its influence persists from generation to generation (see on Matt. 26:13).

10. Ministereth seed. Again Paul quotes from the LXX (Isa. 55:10), reasoning from an analogy between agriculture and the spiritual world. As God requires tillers of the soil with abundant fruitfulness, according to their sowing, so He will do with men who sow the seeds of charity and benevolence. The law of sowing and reaping in the natural world is true also of man's use of his earthly possessions. Those who are generous will reap the more abundantly of God's bounties, though not necessarily in kind (see on Matt. 19:29). God provides the seed, ordains the seasons, and sends both sun and rain; He does the same for the seeds of generosity sown in men's hearts (Hosea 10:12).

11. Being enriched. In the plan of God enrichment with worldly goods and blessings has but one purpose, that of doing good to others. In God's design for the distribution of worldly possessions there is no provision for self-indulgence, self-gratification, self-satisfaction, or self-exaltation.

Bountifulness. See on ch. 8:9.

Thanksgiving. Christians render thanksgiving to God by grateful acknowledgment of their daily blessings and of their privilege of sharing with others who are in need (see on chs. 1:11; 4:15). The giving of thanks and praise to God is characteristic of God's people. Thankfulness is a natural response of the true believer. A living faith always finds expression in both word and deed. True Christianity goes beyond intellectual beliefs to the practical application of its principles to the problems of everyday life.

12. Administration. Or, "ministration," "rendering" (RSV).

Service. Gr. *leitourgia* (see on Luke 1:23), whence comes our word "liturgy." In classical Greek it designated one who rendered public service to the state or who held public office, usually at his own expense. In the LXX it refers to the services of the priests in the Jewish sanctuary (Num. 4:24; cf. 1 Chron. 26:30). In the NT it generally

denotes the service of Christ and His representatives on earth (Luke 1:23; Heb. 8:6; 9:21). Here it refers specifically to the gift of the Corinthians for the relief of the poor in Jerusalem. Christian charity has two aspects, one Godward and the other manward.

Supplieth. Literally, “to fill up by adding to,” here, by meeting the needs of the poor.

The want of the saints. The needs of the poor at Jerusalem.

Is abundant. Or, “overflows,” This expresses the Godward aspect of their gift, which will result in praise and thanksgiving to God, on the part of the recipients and on the part of other Christians who learn of their generosity. The gift is made to God as well as to man (Matt. 25:40).

13. Experiment. Gr. *dokimē*, “trial,” “proof.” *Dokimē* is rendered “trial” in ch. 8:2 “proof” in ch. 13:3 “approved” in Rom. 14:18; 16:10, “experience” in Rom. 5:4. The true results and ultimate consequences of the Corinthian liberality will be seen, not in the material relief and benefits given to needy Christians at Jerusalem, but in the glory they give to God as a result. An essential part of the everlasting gospel is to recognize and honor God (Rev. 14:6, 7). Through His people God purposes to display His power and grace in such a way as to exalt His name. The liberality of the Corinthians glorified God by providing an occasion for proving their sincerity.

Ministration. Or, “service,” that is, to the poor at Jerusalem.

Your professed subjection. Literally, “the obedience of your profession.” Their words would be confirmed by their deeds. Jewish converts to Christianity were suspicious that the conversion of Gentiles to the faith—unless they first accepted Judaism—was not genuine. A generous gift from the Gentile churches to their Jewish brethren would provide the latter with tangible evidence of the loyalty and sincere purpose of the former. Their adherence to Christianity would be proved to be more than a mere profession without practice. It is only when religion leads a man to take a practical interest in the happiness and welfare of his fellow men that his religion is worth anything. A professed love for God that is not reflected in selfless service for others is a worthless counterfeit (see on Matt. 25:31–46; 1 John 3:14; 1 John 4:20, 21). Professed Christians today will do well to measure themselves by this standard.

Liberal distribution. Or, “openhearted contribution.” The proposed collection will demonstrate that the Corinthians have a spirit of true fellowship with their Jewish brethren. Paul hopes to prove that Jew and Gentile are one in Christ. The work of true Christianity is to draw men together in the fellowship of the gospel (John 17:9–11, 20–23).

14. Prayer for you. Paul thinks of the praise that will ascend to God from the saints at Jerusalem when they receive the contribution.

Long after. Or, “yearn for.” An important by-product of Christian service is the resulting spirit of prayer and love. With the non-Christian recipient, attention often centers on the gift, but for the Christian, upon the giver. Prayer for another without love and yearning of heart is not much more than word and form. Love without prayer is shallow, and may not even be true love (see on Matt. 5:43, 44). But prayer motivated by love perfects both and leads to the transformation of character. In this instance, the hearts of the Jewish Christians would be knit with those of their Gentile brethren in deeper and truer fellowship.

15. Unspeakable. Literally, “that which cannot be described in full.” There can be no full and complete exposition of the gift of divine love. This ascription of praise to God

provides a fitting climax to the section dealing with the collection of a gift for the saints at Jerusalem. Scholars are not agreed as to what Paul means by the word “gift.” Some think Paul refers to the proposed collection. But the language here used seems far too strong for such a gift. All through these chapters Paul has stressed, not the material aspect of their gift, but the gift as a result of the operation of God’s grace. The divine gift, by which men are saved, sanctified, and motivated to Christian service for others, is beyond human ability to comprehend in its fullness. Christ is often described in the Scriptures as God’s supreme gift to man (John 3:16; Gal. 1:4; Titus 2:14; etc.). The subject of redemption is inexhaustible, fathomless, beyond finite comprehension. Regardless of how much men study to fathom it, they never discover all its beauty or exhaust its resources. See on John 3:16.

Gratitude to God prepares the way for obedience to His will and for the reception of power to engage in unselfish service. One who is filled with gratitude to God will seek to fulfill all His requirements, not because he is forced to but because he chooses to do so. Gratitude to God is the basis of an effective Christian experience. Not until a man is overwhelmed by loving gratitude to God for His “unspeakable gift” does religion reach inward to the depths of a man’s soul and outward from him in selfless service for his fellow men.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

- 2 MB 80
- 6 COL 85; CS 91; Ed 109; MB 112; PP 528; 2T 641; 4T 484; 9T 127; WM 316
- 6, 7 AA 342; CS 199; ML 116
- 6–8TM 423; 8T 139
- 6–11DA 371; MH 50; 5T 735
- 6–156T 481
- 7 CS 49, 74, 80; PP 529; 1T 530; 3T 413; 5T 269; 7T 294; WM 289
- 8 CS 49, 129; GW 19; MB 112; PP 528; 2T 445; 6T 348
- 8, 9 ML 103
- 8–11AA 334
- 9, 10 9T 132
- 11–158T 139
- 12, 13 CS 344
- 15 MH 425; 5T 580, 730; 6T 32; 8T 288

CHAPTER 10

Against the false apostles, who disgraced the weakness of his person and bodily presence, he setteth out the spiritual might and authority, with which he is armed against all adversary powers, 7 assuring them that at his coming he will be found as mighty in word, as he is now in writing being absent, 12 and withal taxing them for reaching out themselves beyond their compass, and vaunting themselves into other men’s labours.

1. Beseech. Gr. *parakaleō*, “to entreat,” “to admonish,” “to exhort.” This chapter begins the third major section of the epistle, consisting of chs. 10–13. In chs. 1–7 Paul dwells on the power and glory of the apostolic ministry; in chs. 8; 9 the collection for the poor at Jerusalem; in chs. 10:1 to 13:10 Paul himself as an apostle. Here Paul vindicates his apostolic authority and contrasts it with that of his opponents, the “false apostles” (ch. 11:13) who were troubling the church at Corinth. See on v. 22.

In the first nine chapters Paul addresses the cooperative majority, and there is only passing reference to the false leaders and any who may have been influenced by them (chs. 2:17; 3:1; 5:12). Here he warns the Corinthians against these “false apostles” in their midst. He was already fully aware of their baleful influence in the church, but Titus had no doubt brought him a further report of their evil work. For the majority he had nothing but words of affection, exhortation, and reconciliation. But in spite of his instruction the Judaizing element (see on ch. 11:22) had not been won over.

Writing to the Corinthian church near the close of the century, Clement of Rome found the same antagonistic elements at work. Nevertheless, Paul’s rebuke of this insubordinate group seems, for a time at least, to have freed the church from the dissension stirred up by it. His firm dealing with the situation left no question in the minds of the Corinthian believers as to his authority as an apostle. The closing chapters of 2 Corinthians are rich with counsel for those who have to meet similar discordant elements today.

An understanding of the nature of the change at this point in the epistle is essential to a correct interpretation of what follows. The first person plural “we” gives way to the first person singular “I.” The first words in the Greek are intensely personal and emphatic, “I Paul myself” (cf. Gal. 5:2; Eph. 3:1; Philemon 19). The apostle now poses the full weight of his authority and personality against the false, Judaizing (see on 2 Cor. 11:22) leaders. They have charged him with cowardice and timidity (ch. 10:1, 2), contemptible speech (ch. 11:6), doubtful intelligence and judgment (vs. 16–19). But they are false guides with erroneous teachings and “another gospel” (v. 4). They are insolent braggarts (vs. 20, 21), impertinent intruders (ch. 10:15), and guilty of imposing themselves upon the believers (ch. 11:20). But at last a time of reckoning has come. They will now have to deal with Paul personally. In these chapters his general tone is one of indignation and stinging rebuke. At times he speaks almost apologetically for the severity of what he feels must be said. Nowhere else in Paul’s writings is there anything comparable in spirit and method to what appears in chs. 10–13.

Meekness. Gr. *praotēs*, “gentleness,” “mildness,” “meekness.” For a study of the related word *praiūs* see on Matt. 5:5.

Gentleness. Gr. *epieikeia*, “mildness,” “gentleness,” “fairness.” Perhaps “gentleness” best expresses the shade of meaning conveyed by *epieikeia*, but with the added ideas of equity and fairness prompted by sincere love and devotion.

Paul prefers to imitate the meek and gentle spirit of Christ in his dealings with men, and takes no pleasure in severity. But even his severity is marked with humility. In vs. 1–6 Paul pleads with the Corinthians not to compel him to use stern measures and words against them. Such weapons are seldom the most effective, and their use can be justified only when “meekness and gentleness” fail. Paul is on his way to Corinth, and will soon confront his opponents face to face. If it is stern discipline they want, he is quite prepared to administer it. His present appeal, severe in tone though it is, will, he hopes, obviate the need for even more severe words when he appears in person.

Paul’s opponents were arrogant, willful, and self-conceited. They misconstrued his meekness for weakness, his gentleness for cowardice. Accordingly they were beyond the reach of conciliatory appeals and kind exhortation such as that of chs. 1–7. The only way to penetrate their callous self-satisfaction was by the rebuke, denunciation, and exposure

of chs. 10–13. Those who suffer from an inflated idea of their own importance are usually unimpressed by the gentler virtues. They even disdain those who possess the finer qualities of humility and gentleness. To them, position and leadership maintained by dominating others is the mark of success. Paul therefore explains that although he would have preferred to address himself to them in the spirit of mildness, their own attitude has compelled him to use sterner measures.

Base. Gr. *tapeinos*, “lowly” or “humble,” here in an uncomplimentary sense. Paul alludes to the taunts of his opponents (v. 10; cf. ch. 12:5, 7). They had ridiculed him, insinuating he was a weakling and a coward. Furthermore, had he not been afraid all along to come to Corinth? Had he not delayed coming because he dreaded facing them? Had he not compensated for this timidity by writing severe letters?

Bold. Gr. *tharreō*, “to be of good courage,” “to be hopeful,” “to be bold” (see v. 10).

2. Beseech. Gr. *deomai*, “to beg,” “to plead.” *Deomai* expresses more urgency than *parakaleō* (2 Cor. 10:1; see Matt. 9:38; Luke 8:28; 9:40; Acts 21:39; 2 Cor. 5:20; etc.; see on 2 Cor. 10:1). Paul earnestly desires to be spared the necessity of a decisive show of his authority, which would inevitably embarrass and humiliate them. He pleads with them not to let it come to this. It is characteristic of the spirit of love to shrink from inflicting pain or humiliation on anyone. Patient, earnest, and unobtrusive endeavor to make things right in the spirit of Christian fellowship is always preferable to a public demonstration of authority and administration of discipline.

Bold. That is, in dealing with matters at Corinth. Paul is not here making a hollow boast. Boldness in the face of danger has long been a fixed habit with him (see on chs. 4:8–10; 11:23–27). If need be, the obdurate minority at Corinth will have an opportunity to see this side of Paul’s otherwise humble, patient, meek character. There will be no fear of any man, no hesitancy to act. For once, he will deal boldly with them (ch. 11:21) unless a change in their attitude and conduct makes it unnecessary for him to do so. It is entirely for them to decide. He is fully prepared to confront his critics personally and to deal effectively with them.

As if we walked. Or, “as if we acted.”

The flesh. Here, the unregenerate person, the carnal, natural, worldly side of man uninfluenced by the Holy Spirit (see on Rom. 7:24; cf. on 1 Cor. 9:27). Man’s natural impulses are called “the lust of the flesh” (1 John 2:16). Those who are controlled and guided by the Spirit do not “fulfil the lust of the flesh” (Gal. 5:16; cf. Eph. 2:3; 2 Peter 2:18). The Bible speaks of “fleshly wisdom” (2 Cor. 1:12). A carnal person is said to “mind the things of the flesh” (Rom. 8:5; cf. Col. 2:18). “No good thing” resides in the “flesh” (Rom. 7:18), for it is “enmity against” God (ch. 8:7).

Judging him by themselves, the enemies of Paul at Corinth seem to have accused him of being motivated by selfish, worldly aims (cf. 2 Cor. 1:17). It is always the character of such men to judge the motives and conduct of others by the level of their own. But when confronted by a man of Paul’s sanctified boldness and courage they take refuge either in flight or in affected servility. They shrink to their true, small stature.

3. Walk in the flesh. That is, live in this world as a human being.

War after the flesh. Though living among men who resort to worldly methods, Paul does not condescend to do so. Compare Christ’s words about His followers being “in the world” but “not of the world” (John 17:11, 14). The converted man possesses an entirely

new and different nature, and is motivated by the above love of Christ and the Spirit of God, in harmony with divine ideals (John 3:3, 5; Rom. 8:5–14; 1 Cor. 2:12–16; 2 Cor. 5:14). He has gained the victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil (see 1 John 2:15, 16). With the experience of regeneration and the new birth, there exists at once an active and inveterate hostility and war between flesh and spirit (Rom. 8:3–14; Gal. 5:16–23). The two cannot be united. The flesh can never become spiritual. In it “dwelleth no good thing” (Rom. 7:18). The Christian is still in the world, but his spiritual nature predominates over the lower, fleshly nature (see Rom. 1:18 to 2:4). Paul fights the good fight of faith with spiritual weapons, not those of the world (Eph. 6:12–20). Paul understands the true nature of the situation at Corinth, and will not hesitate to use these weapons as the situation may require.

4. Weapons of our warfare. See on Eph. 6:10–20; cf. 1 Tim. 1:18; 2 Tim. 2:3–5; 4:7. The weapons of the world are wealth, talent, learning, prestige, rank, influence, reason, perversion of truth, force, and human schemes. Paul’s foes at Corinth were fighting him with these weapons (see on 2 Cor. 3:1). But Paul refused to fight in this armor or with these weapons, for the principles of heaven do not permit the use of such methods (cf. John 18:36). If the saving of souls and the extension of Christ’s kingdom were dependent upon human talent, intellect, and power, Christianity would be a purely human religion. But spiritual qualities can never be imposed upon men from without.

Mighty through God. The weapons of the Christian are forged in the arsenal of heaven, and are made available to him through the ministry of angels (2 Cor. 1:12; Eph. 6:10–20; cf. DA 827). These weapons include truth as set forth in the Word of God (Heb. 4:12), and the imparted power of Christ and the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 2:4). God calls men to this conflict, equips them for battle, and assures them of victory. He supplies man with all the power (2 Cor. 2:14).

Pulling down of. Or, “demolition of.” No fortress of human devising can withstand the weapons of heaven.

Strong holds. Or, “castles,” “fortresses.” Paul represents the kingdom of Satan as being defended by numerous fortifications. It is the work of the Christian and the church to lay siege to the foe, destroy his defenses, and drive him out into the open. Paul doubtless thinks of the inner citadels of men’s hearts, the evil fortifications of their minds, the entrenched habits of sin and self. The battle is one of truth against error, the knowledge of God against ignorance and superstition, true worship against all forms of idolatry, liberty in Christ against the bondage of sin, holiness against wickedness, righteousness against unrighteousness, Christ’s control against that of Satan.

The figurative language of vs. 4, 5 may have been suggested to Paul’s mind by pirates that infested the seacoast in the vicinity of Tarsus before they were driven from the seas by Roman galleys a generation before his birth. These marauders of the sea sallied forth from many hidden coves on the coast, raided ships trading at nearby ports, and then retired with their booty. Finally the Roman general Pompey led a campaign against them, reduced more than 100 of their “strong holds” to ruins, and captured more than 10,000 prisoners.

5. Imaginations. Gr. *logismous*, “reasonings,” “thoughts” (see Rom. 2:3, 15). Paul refers to human theories in contrast with revealed truth. There is nothing more self-deceptive than the speculative reasoning of conceited men who have boundless

confidence in their own inherent wisdom and nothing but scorn for God and His Word. Paul proposes to assault the very citadels of evil.

Every high thing. That is, every defiant wall and tower. Paul here compares the proud speculations of men to forts atop high hills. Defiance of the God of heaven has ever been the mark of the forces of evil and rebellion (Isa. 14:13–15; Dan. 7:25; 8:11; 11:36; 2 Thess. 2:4; Rev. 13:5–8). Individually, men set up their own particular stronghold from which to resist the power of God. The strongest fortress for evil is a way of life that, while professedly Christian, actually goes contrary to Christian principles.

The knowledge of God. That is, the knowledge that comes from God. The exaltation of human wisdom is in opposition to that superior, spiritual knowledge that God imparts (John 17:8; Acts 17:23; 1 Cor. 1:24; 2:10; Col. 1:9). The philosopher's god is one created by his own thought processes. The Christian's God is the God of divine revelation. The one is subjective, the other objective.

If accepted, the humbling truths of the gospel, such as the sinfulness of man and the atoning righteousness of Christ, cast down vain self-confidence, intellectual conceit, the pride of worldly wisdom, and all human pretensions.

Bringing into captivity. Or, “subjugating,” “bringing under control.”

Thought. Gr. *noēma*, translated “minds” in 2 Cor. 3:14; 4:4; 11:3; Phil. 4:7, and “devices” in 2 Cor. 2:11. Paul may here refer to the fanciful theology of the “false apostles” (ch. 11:13) which originated in the mind of Satan.

Obedience of Christ. Without obedience born of love there can be no such thing as genuine Christian experience (see on Matt. 7:21–27). Christ has not left man in doubt as to the nature of true obedience (see John 14:15, 21, 23, 24; 15:10; 17:6, 17). All genuine Christians will gladly submit themselves to the loving authority of Christ. To bow to authority, especially that of Christ and His Word, is repugnant to proud hearts and minds. The principal reason why the gospel has not made more progress in the world and in the lives of men is unwillingness to make Christ truly Lord of the life and to accept the authority of the entire Word of God.

6. Having in a readiness. That is, being ready.

To revenge. Or, “punish.” Paul is ready to exercise his apostolic authority to discipline and punish the rebellious group in the Corinthian church. Heretofore he has refrained from doing so because the issue was not yet clear, and many might have been led to make a wrong decision. Now the issue is clear, and the majority have taken their stand with Paul and will support him in his stand against the recalcitrant minority. Earlier, some of them might have sympathized with the rebels, possibly might even have sided with them against Paul. What these few rebels have interpreted as cowardice and timidity on his part was simply patience, which he exercised in the hope that others might be won over. He would avoid being severe toward anyone who has been led astray by their specious teachings and methods, who has as yet failed to see the issues clearly, and who might yet be won back to the right side. Paul has already written two, possibly three, letters to them, patiently explaining the issues (see p. 822).

Your obedience is fulfilled. Paul is now prepared to take drastic action. This is his final warning. What form of punishment he intends to inflict upon the few who have exercised such a strong and baleful influence, he does not say. Probably he will administer to them a public reprimand, and if all other means fail, expel them from the

church (cf. 1 Cor. 5:5; 1 Tim. 5:20). If any are as yet undecided, let them make up their minds now.

7. *Do ye look?* The Greek may be translated as a question, as an imperative, or as a simple statement. As a question it would be one of disapproval—Are the Corinthians judging on the basis of outward appearance? As an imperative it would call upon them to open their eyes to the obvious facts. As a simple statement it would be a charge that some of the Corinthians are still looking on outward appearances. Whichever of these three Paul may have intended, the statement implies that they have not critically examined the charges brought against him. Their conclusions have been reached emotionally rather than logically, and on the basis of outward appearances (see on ch. 5:12). Surface judgments are popular because few people are willing to reserve judgment until they have had an opportunity to examine all the evidence.

If any man. Paul here seems to refer either to one of the leaders of the opposition or to some who were sincere at heart but still confused in their thinking. The context seems to favor the former. Compare the “some” of v. 2 (cf. ch. 11:4, 20).

He is Christ’s. That is, claims to be a duly appointed representative of Christ.

Even so are we. Paul here refers to his own official commission as an apostle. In this and the two following chapters he repeatedly refers to his qualifications as an ambassador of Christ. His authority is equal to that of the Twelve (chs. 11:5; 12:11, 12). He was called and commissioned directly by the Lord (Acts 9:3–9; 22:17–21; cf. 1 Cor. 15:8; 2 Cor. 10:14–18). He had experienced fellowship with Christ in His sufferings (ch. 11:23–33). He had received visions and revelations directly from Christ (ch. 12:1–6).

8. *Boast.* Gr. *kauchaomai*, “to boast,” “to glory.” Paul uses the word 21 times in this epistle. Apparently the false leaders at Corinth had engaged in considerable egotistical boasting (see on ch. 5:12). It is now Paul’s turn to boast, but he does so reluctantly, in moderation, and with the sole purpose of confirming his authority as an apostle of Christ, for the benefit of any who might as yet honestly be confused in the matter.

In this matter there was one great difference between Paul and the false leaders. They boasted of an authority that was, in fact, only of human origin and selfish in its aims. Paul boasted of an authority that was divinely bestowed and exercised for the edification of the church. Since his authority was from God, the Corinthians were to acknowledge and respect it. The result would be the edification of the church at Corinth, the defeat of the schismatic elements, and the vindication of Paul as an apostle of Jesus Christ.

Edification. Literally, “building up.” Paul’s use of this word implies the figure of the Christian as a temple in which God dwells (1 Cor. 3:9–17; 2 Cor. 6:16; Eph. 2:20–22; 1 Peter 2:4, 5). Gospel authority is for the purpose of building up, and not of tearing down. The aim of the false leaders at Corinth was to exalt, or build up, themselves, and the effect was to divide and tear down the church. Paul had founded the church at Corinth, and his exercise of authority, even in severe discipline, was designed to build it up.

Not be ashamed. The false apostles at Corinth had purposed to put Paul to shame by ridiculing him as an apostle and by making light of his gospel. Paul declares that his purpose in boasting “somewhat” of his “authority” as an apostle is in defense of his apostleship and of his gospel. He has no ulterior motives.

9. *Terrify you.* Or, “frighten you.” The enemies at Corinth had doubtless attributed such a motive to Paul, but he denies that his purpose is to overawe the believers.

Letters. Paul had already written at least two letters to Corinth, possibly more (see on ch. 2:3, 4; cf. p. 822). Using the plural, “letters,” Paul doubtless includes the lost letter mentioned in 1 Cor. 5:9.

10. Weighty and powerful. Here Paul evidently quotes the very words of his critics. Even his enemies admit that he is an effective letter writer, and time has confirmed their judgment. Little did his enemies know that his epistles were inspired, and that they would constitute no small part of what was eventually to become the NT, the basis of Christian theology. His epistles abound with irresistible arguments for the faith. They are filled with the power of the Holy Spirit manifested in stern rebuke, in Christian love and gentleness, in the exaltation of Christ as Redeemer, in appeals to lost men and women to accept the way of salvation, in inspiration to fellowship with Christ, and in personal testimony of his own miraculous conversion and Christian experience.

Presence. Gr. *parousia* (see on Matt. 24:3). This is the only NT reference to the personal appearance of any of the apostles (cf. 1 Cor. 2:3, 4; 2 Cor. 12:7–10; Gal. 4:13, 14). Writers before the 4th century stated that Paul was short of stature, stooped—probably from repeated beatings (2 Cor. 11:24, 25)—bald, and had crooked thighs, but was full of grace, and had eyes burning with love, nobility, and zeal for Christ (see Paul and Thecla 1:7). Other early writers confirm this description, but of course it is only a tradition. In ch. 10:1 Paul apparently confirms the idea that in personal appearance he was anything but impressive. But that his opponents at Corinth should stoop to ridicule his physical weaknesses, and perhaps slight deformity, reveals their despicable character.

Contemptible. Or, “despicable.” This charge seems at least to have been a gross exaggeration, if not an outright slander. Paul was a superior speaker (Acts 14:12; cf. ch. 24:1–21). It is undoubtedly true that after the experience at Athens Paul avoided the rhetoric and oratory that delighted the Greeks (see 1 Cor. 2:2). He refused to make these the means of attracting men to Christ. Nothing must be permitted to detract from the clarity and forcefulness of the gospel (1 Cor. 2:4, 5).

11. Such an one. See on vs. 2, 7. Paul addresses the person or persons primarily to blame for the trouble. His statement is not so much a threat of what he intends to do upon arrival at Corinth, as a rebuttal of the charge that he is one thing when absent and quite another when present. It would seem that Paul’s trenchant, logical declarations in chs. 10–12 must have convinced his opponents that the position into which their malicious lies had put them was untenable. It was utterly illogical to think that a man such as they described Paul to be could raise up church after church like that at Corinth. Wherever Paul went, he left behind multitudes of Jews and Gentiles won to the Christian faith as evidence of the power of the gospel as preached by him.

12. We dare not. In vs. 12–18 Paul exalts his labors as a gospel minister. In this epistle he repeatedly defends his integrity as an apostle (chs. 3:1; 4:2; 5:12; 12:11). Now he subtly compares his opponents’ conceited and vainglorious boasting with his own circumspect labors while at Corinth. He turns the tables on his opponents by a clever play on the words *egkrinō* and *sugkrinō* (see below).

Paul evidently refers to the charge of cowardice. If his opponents mean that he lacks the courage to assert himself and be a real leader in the popular sense, he readily admits the charge. Furthermore, he neither cares nor dares to seek the plaudits of men. The conceited boldness his opponents have shown has no appeal for him. But there is one kind of courage he does not lack (ch. 11:21–30), the courage to press into new lands with

the gospel and the courage to suffer for Christ (ch. 10:15, 16). He measures himself and his work according to the will and standard of God (Rom. 12:3; Eph. 4:7). To the Galatians, Paul declared that he dared not do any boasting except in “the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Gal. 6:14).

Make ourselves of the number. Gr. *egkrinō*, “to reckon among,” “to judge worthy of being admitted to,” a presumably select circle.

Or compare. Gr. *sugkrinō*, “to compare,” “to measure.” Paul will not venture to compete with these masters of self-flattery; for in this respect they far surpass anything of which he is capable.

Commend themselves. These Corinthian braggarts were members, it would seem, of what might be called a mutual admiration society. Each man set himself up as his own standard of excellence, and praised other members of the society in order to advance his own interests as an individual and those of the group to which he belonged. Having set up their own supposed virtues as a standard of comparison, they became their own ideal.

Self-praise is the worst form of self-deception. Conceit blinds men to an objective standard of excellence by which they can make an unbiased evaluation of themselves, and as a result they are forever pursuing themselves in a vicious circle. They become blind to God’s standard of measurement, blind to their own pride, blind to the excellent qualities of any who oppose them, blind even to their own need of salvation. This mode of self-appraisal, originating in self and ending with self, lacks insight or even enlightened self-interest. To live by this standard is completely contrary to the mind and spirit of Christ (Phil. 2:5–11).

Are not wise. It is the height of pride for a sinful man to consider himself as perfect, or nearly so (Rom. 7:18; 1 John 1:10). A sense of one’s own imperfection is the first requirement Heaven makes of all who would be accepted as the sons and daughters of God (see on Matt. 5:3).

13. Without our measure. Or, “beyond the limit,” that is, the limit of right and propriety marked out by God—the measure of the rule which God has distributed to us. Paul’s opponents had no standard by which to measure themselves except themselves. They had, as it were, no way to lift themselves but by their own bootstraps. The word “we” is emphatic in the Greek, and stresses the great difference between Paul and his fellow workers on the one hand and the self-commending Judaizers on the other. Paul recognizes a fixed limit to his authority, sphere of activity, and vigor of conduct (see Gal. 2:7–9). Beyond this divinely appointed limit he does not dare to go.

Paul’s special sphere of labor was among the Gentiles (Acts 26:17, 18; Gal. 2:7–9). He began at Antioch and reached out to the farthest bounds of the Gentile world. At the time he wrote, Corinth marked the farthest extent of his labors. The false apostles at Corinth recognized no limitation on their activities. Their very presence and assumption of authority was sufficient to condemn them. They had pursued Paul from Jerusalem to Antioch, to Galatia, and now to Corinth, seeking to undo his work, claiming credit for what he had done, and boasting as though his achievements were their own.

Paul had every right to the loyalty of the Corinthians; these false apostles had none. God had assigned him to the work at Corinth (Acts 18:8–10). God had not sent them to Corinth, and there was only one other source from which they could have received their commission (2 Cor. 11:3), yet here they were. The apostle did not take credit to himself for the success of other men.

14. *We stretch not ourselves.* That is, we are not exceeding the bounds of our appointed sphere of labor.

Reached not unto you. That is, as though Corinth were beyond Paul's assigned territory. Macedonia and Greece were within his designated sphere of action (Acts 16:9, 10). Thus it was by divine appointment that he was first to preach the gospel at Corinth. In opposing him there, the false leaders at Corinth proved themselves to be usurpers—without commission, without authority, without valid credentials. Their only equipment consisted of their own conceited claims.

15. *Not boasting.* See on v. 8.

Without our measure. See on v. 13. Paul's guiding principle had ever been to plant the gospel in virgin soil, to do pioneer work (Rom. 15:20), and for this reason he ran no risk of boasting of other men's labors.

Your faith. The improved spiritual condition of the Corinthian believers gave Paul reason to believe that the church in that city would soon become a bastion of the faith, and a salient from which further triumphs of the gospel might be achieved. The maturity of their faith would make possible the extension of his labors in fields beyond. Thus far, he had been hindered, in part by the difficult situation at Corinth, from pressing on into new territory. There is every reason to believe that his expressed hope to open up new areas to the gospel were fulfilled (cf. Rom. 15:22–28). Also, as their faith grew, Paul's own reputation as an apostle would be magnified. Their spiritual maturity as Christians would be to him a crown of glory, as a teacher is honored by the accomplishments of his students (see on 2 Cor. 3:1–3). One evidence of maturity in a church is that it no longer needs the nursing required by spiritual babes (1 Cor. 3:1–3). Unfortunately, today, as in apostolic times, some churches restrict the work of their pastor by continually requiring his attention for services of which spiritually mature people feel no need. An unspiritual church will not long sustain healthy mission work.

Enlarged by you. Paul sought to inspire with missionary zeal the churches he founded. He entered his own work in the great cities, moving from one to another, and leaving to each strategically located church the responsibility for evangelizing the district in which it was located. This method of evangelism proved most effective, for many of the large central churches founded and mothered other churches within their respective districts. The church of Laodicea, for example, is said to have founded 16 other churches in its immediate vicinity. It is the privilege of every church to send its members forth for Christ.

16. *Regions beyond.* The only indication of the regions Paul has in mind is in Rom. 15:19–24—Illyricum, Italy, and Spain. It is evident that there were already Christians at Rome and that a church existed there (Rom. 1:7–13), but apparently without the benefit of apostolic labors.

Another man's line. That is, the region of labor belonging to someone else. Under no circumstances would Paul encroach upon the territory of another and take credit for his labors, as the false apostles at Corinth had done.

17. *Glory in the Lord.* Or, "boast of the Lord," instead of in oneself. Verse 17 is a quotation from Jer. 9:24 (see comment there). The credit for success, whether in personal Christian experience or in ministry for others, belongs to God. To arrogate to oneself honor for success is to dishonor God by turning men's eyes from Him to the human instrument, and to exalt man above God. See Ps. 115:1; 1 Cor. 1:31; 10:12; 15:10; 2 Cor.

12:5; Gal. 2:20; 6:14; see on 1 Cor. 1:31. Those who become satisfied with themselves fall short of the Christian ideal (Phil. 3:12–14). Those who keep in constant fellowship with Christ never have an exalted opinion of themselves (see SC 64).

18. The Lord commendeth. A position of leadership presents the temptation to accept the plaudits of men and take selfish pride in one's achievements. The next step is a desire to exercise arbitrary authority over others. For the Christian, however, the only desirable approval is the approval of God (see Rom. 2:29; 1 Cor. 3:13, 14; 4:1–6). Only those who endure this test, and triumph over conceit, pride, and self-exaltation, will receive the approval of God. The self-commendation of the false apostles at Corinth, who in reality had no success of their own to boast of, conclusively proved them to be wholly without approval from God. For comment as to the basis on which God rewards service see on Matt. 20:1–16.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

- 4 AA 463; Ev 574; 3T 210; 7T 141
- 5 AA 251, 482; AH 128, 306; CH 505; COL 312; CT 25, 68, 238; DA 135, 181; Ev 274; FE 174, 266; GW 127; MB 142; MH 460; ML 263, 318; MYP 73; PK 233; TM 223, 388; 2T 251; 3T 31, 83, 106; 5T 310, 514, 648; 6T 317; 8T 63, 314, 320, 334
- 10 EW 206
- 12 CG 294; Ed 226; 1T 126, 154, 406; 2T 394, 396
- 16 MH 106; 6T 286; 8T 48, 50

CHAPTER 11

1 *Out of his jealousy over the Corinthians, who seemed to make more account of the false apostles than of him, he entereth into a forced commendation of himself, 5 of his equality with the chief apostles, 7 of his preaching the gospel to them freely, and without any their charge, 13 shewing that he was not inferior to those deceitful workers in any legal prerogative, 23 and in the service of Christ, and in all kind of sufferings for his ministry, far superior.*

1. Would to God. In chs. 11; 12 Paul proceeds to vindicate his claim to apostolic office and authority, and thus to counteract the tactics of his opponents, by boasting of his own weakness and of the power of God. The boasts of his opponents stressed and exaggerated Paul's weaknesses and inadequacies, supposed or real, implying, by contrast, their own vaunted ability as apostles (see on ch. 10:10). The words "to God" are not in the Greek, but were supplied by the translators.

Bear with me. Paul would prefer not to indulge even in the humble boasting about his weaknesses in which he is about to engage, and requests their condescension to listen to him.

My folly. Certain expressions appear repeatedly in chs. 11 and 12: (1) "bear with" and "suffer" (both from *anechō*, ch. 11:1, 4, 19, 20), and (2) "folly" and "fool" (chs. 11:1, 16, 17, 19; 12:6, 11). Paul's critics had apparently made the apostle out to be a fool, and now, as a "fool," he boasts of his "infirmities" (ch. 11:30) and apologetically speaks of his boasting as "folly." To boast as Paul's critics did was, to him, folly of the crudest sort, a kind of boasting that he considered altogether incompatible with his self-sacrificing humility, quiet dignity, and apostolic responsibility. Such boasting was utterly opposed to the spirit of Christ (Phil. 2:5–8), and Paul felt foolish indeed to be placed in a position where (see on 2 Cor. 10:8, 13–18; 12:10, 11), to defend his apostolic authority, it seemed

needful to engage in what might be taken as boasting (ch. 11:16). In his boasting Paul calls attention to:

1. His apostleship—his title, office, and authority—as being in no way inferior to that of the “chiefest apostles” (v. 5).
2. His preaching of the gospel without charge or material support from any of the Corinthian believers, whereas his opponents had literally robbed them (chs. 11:7–10, 19, 20; 12:13–18).
3. His equality of heritage (ch. 11:22).
4. His abundant labors (ch. 11:23).
5. His unbelievable sufferings, trials, and persecutions for Christ’s sake (ch. 11:23–33).
6. His visions and revelations (ch. 12:1–5).
7. His “thorn in the flesh” (ch. 12:7–10).

If boasting is in order, Paul has much of which a person could boast. In comparison, what had his enemies to boast about? By boasting he exposes the emptiness of their pretentious claims. His reason for condescending to speak of himself and his labors as he does is to help them to realize and appreciate what he had accomplished among them, so that they might not be led by the false apostles to despise him and his message, thus destroying the fruit of his labors.

Bear with me. Paul is confident that the majority of the church members will understand, and “bear” with him. He trusts them. They will interpret his words in love, with a spirit that thinks no evil, whereas his enemies will not. What a privilege it is for a Christian worker to enjoy the full confidence of his friends and converts, and be able to unburden his heart to them.

2. I am jealous. Gr. *zēloō*, “to burn with zeal.” Used in a good sense, it means to be enthusiastic in the pursuit of good, to be filled with ardor. Here, Paul is deeply concerned lest the Corinthians be seduced and corrupted by the false apostles. In a bad sense, *zēloō* denotes envious and contentious rivalry. In the good sense, God is said to be jealous over His people. God will endure no rival.

Godly jealousy. God appreciates the love of His people, and feels deeply any lessening of their affection for Him (see Eze. 18:31; 33:11; cf. Ex. 20:5; 34:14; Deut. 4:24; Joshua 24:19; Zech. 8:2). For a time the Corinthians had transferred their affections from Paul to a rival. Paul’s concern for them is not a mean, human jealousy, but a jealousy like that of God.

Espoused you. That is, given you in marriage, or betrothed you. In ancient times a middleman was employed to make arrangements for the betrothal of a son or daughter (see Matt. 25:1–13; 1 Cor. 7:36–38; see on Gen. 24). For practical purposes an ancient betrothal was as binding as the marriage itself. Here, Paul was the middleman between Christ and the church.

The bride-elect either remained at home with her parents or was committed to the care and protection of trusted friends of the bridegroom until the husband-elect should come for her. Often considerable time elapsed between the betrothal and the wedding, but during this time all communication between the future husband and the bride-to-be was carried on through the trusted “friend” (see John 3:29). It was also his responsibility to train and prepare the bride for the day her husband would come. The responsibility of the

“friend” was considered sacred. Faithlessness on the part of the bride-elect was sometimes punishable by death.

Here, Christ is the Bridegroom, the Corinthian church is the bride-elect, and Paul is the “friend” of the Bridegroom. It was Paul who had negotiated the betrothal of the Corinthian believers to Christ (cf. Rom. 7:1–6), and he was anxious that the Corinthian church should remain pure and undefiled.

Marriage is frequently employed in Scripture as an illustration of the relationship between Christ and His people (Isa. 54:5; 62:5; Jer. 3; Eze. 16:8–63; Hosea 2:18–20; Eph. 5:25–32). The high priest, who typified Christ, was permitted to marry only one who was a pure virgin (Lev. 21:10–14). The anxious expectation of the church is to meet Christ face to face.

Present you. The supreme moment in the ancient marriage ritual came when the bridegroom appeared to claim his bride and escort her to his home to the wedding feast. As friend of the Bridegroom, Paul thinks of his joy when Christ returns and he will have the joy of presenting the Corinthians to Christ. It will be a day of joy when the bride looks upon the Bridegroom’s face and beholds His glorious person (1 Cor. 13:12; 1 Peter 1:7, 8; 1 John 3:2). The Bridegroom will then look upon His bride, adorned in the pure white garments of righteousness, and satisfied (Isa. 53:11; Zeph. 3:17), will take her to His Father’s house (John 14:1–3).

3. Beguiled. Or, “deceived.” Paul fears that these false apostles—emissaries of Satan—will seduce the Corinthians as the serpent seduced Eve. In both instances Satan masterminded the evil plot (Gen. 3:1–11; John 8:44; 1 John 3:8). Because the serpent became the instrument of Satan for the fall of Adam and Eve and the entrance of sin into the world, the Scriptures commonly speak of him as the “serpent” (Rev. 12:9; 20:2). Paul’s theology is based on the premise that the fall of man was a historical event (see on Rom. 5:12–19).

Subtily. Or, “craftiness,” “cunning.” Deception is Satan’s stock in trade (John 8:44; Rev. 20:8); without it he would have no success at all.

Minds. Gr. *noēmata*, “thoughts” (see on ch. 10:5). The particular object of Satan’s attack is the human mind (John 12:40; see on 2 Cor. 10:4, 5). In Corinth the corruption of believers’ minds came about through the agency of false teachers. Satan corrupts the mind by warping and searing the conscience. His work is opposite to that of the gospel, which is to purify the conscience.

Satan accomplishes his nefarious work by blinding men’s minds to the truth, by hardening and deceiving their hearts, and by enslaving the reason to the passions. He causes men and women to doubt God’s love and seeks to deprive them of the power to choose the right. He occupies their minds with anything and everything that will crowd out time, and the desire, for Christ, for His righteousness, and for His kingdom (Luke 21:34–36). He seeks to inject into every mind hostility and rebellion against God (Rom. 8:7; James 4:4).

Corrupted. Or, “depraved.” In Rev. 19:2 “corrupt” is used figuratively of marital unchastity. In Bible times infidelity after betrothal was considered almost equivalent to adultery after marriage (see on Matt. 1:18, 19). Spiritually, as the intermediary between bride and heavenly Groom, the guardian and protector of the bride-elect must give an account of the Corinthian church, and he dare not be careless. He therefore watches over

her with “godly jealousy” (2 Cor. 11:2), and considers these false leaders as rival aspirants to the virgin’s hand and heart.

Simplicity. Or, “sincerity.” Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the addition of the words “and purity.” Paul here speaks of singlehearted faith in, and devotion to, Christ (cf. James 1:8). He repeatedly insists upon the virtue of fidelity to Christ.

The statement of 2 Cor. 11:3, about being “corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ,” emphatically denies the teaching that a man cannot fall from grace and that when “once saved” he is “always saved” (see on John 3:18–21; Gal. 5:4). Even Lucifer, created perfect in beauty and character, fell from his original purity and obedience. Paul clearly recognizes the possibility of dissolving the marriage of believers with Christ by the corrupting power of Satan. When this occurs, the union between Christ and His “bride” is broken.

God’s instructions to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden were simple indeed. He left no doubt as to what He required of them and what would happen if they disobeyed. God gave them one clear reason for not eating the forbidden fruit; Satan offered several plausible reasons in favor of doing so. How simple is God’s definition and interpretation of sin (Matt. 5:21, 22, 27, 28; 1 John 3:4). How simple is the invitation to come to Christ (Isa. 55:1; Rev. 22:17). How clear is the way of truth and righteousness, and how devious the way of darkness and error (John 3:19–21). How simple and explicit are God’s assurances, and how beautifully transparent His promises (2 Cor. 7:1). How simple and true is real love, whereas the divided heart is confused. How strait and narrow is the way of righteousness and life in contrast with the broad and tortuous way of sin and death (Matt. 7:13, 14).

4. Another. Gr. *allos*, “another” of the same kind (see on Matt. 6:24). These Judaizers were not preaching a different Jesus and a different gospel. They were converted Jews (Acts 15:1, 5) and professed to believe in the same Jesus. There was, however, a party of Judaizers whose creed actually constituted what Paul designates as another gospel (Gal. 1:8). These misguided Jews believed that Jesus was the Messiah, but also that men must keep the ceremonial law in order to be saved. Paul’s gospel, however, consisted of simple and true faith in Jesus as man’s complete Saviour from sin, that the ceremonial law was no longer binding, and that obedience to the moral law automatically follows justification, and is not the basis for it (see on Rom. 3:24, 31; 8:1–4).

Paul appears to be writing in irony, quietly rebuking the Corinthians for having been duped by intruders. If indeed they have found a better Jesus and a better gospel, accept it! On the other hand, Paul may simply be stating, factually, what they have done.

In our day there is all the difference in the world between the Christ of Paul and the Gospels, and the Christ of modernist Christians. The latter admire and commend Jesus for His noble life but deprive Him of His deityship and His vicariously atoning power (2 Peter 2:1; 1 John 4:1–3).

Another spirit. Here the word for “another” is *heteros*, “another [of a different kind]” (see on Matt. 6:24). To believe in another Jesus would result in another gospel and another spirit. The true spirit of Christ is imparted to men and women by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:14, 15; Gal. 5:22, 23). The false spirit is one of fear that issues from a wrong concept of God, which makes Him out to be a hard taskmaster. The spirit of Christ is the spirit of true liberty (2 Cor. 3:17, 18), whereas the spirit of Paul’s opponents and their “gospel” is the spirit of bondage (Gal. 3:1–5; 4:1–9; see on 2 Cor. 3:6). Theirs is a spirit

of self-righteousness, as opposed to the spirit of humble gratitude for the righteousness that comes through faith in Christ (Rom. 3:25, 26).

Another gospel. Here the word for “another” is *heteros*, “another [of a different kind]” (see on Matt. 6:24).

Bear with him. Or, “listen to him.”

5. Not a whit. That is, not in the least.

Chiefest. Or, “pre-eminent,” “superlative,” literally, “overmuch.” Possibly not a reference to the Twelve but to the false apostles who had been troubling the church at Corinth, whose activities are referred to in vs. 3, 4. The Greek term tends to express disapprobation, and seems to be used in irony rather than seriously. Paul always speaks of the Twelve with great respect (1 Cor. 15:8–10; Gal. 2:8–10). Here he begins the boasting to which he refers in v. 1, comparing himself with these self-appointed apostles (see on v. 1).

6. Rude. Gr. *idiōtēs*, “unlearned,” “illiterate,” “unskilled” (cf. Acts 4:13). In classical Greek *idiōtēs* denotes a lack of skill in any art or profession. In 1 Cor. 14:16, 23, 24 it refers to persons lacking the gift of tongues. Though Paul here refers to himself as an unskilled speaker (cf. 1 Cor. 1:17; 2:1, 4), he was no mean speaker (Acts 14:12; 22:1–21; 24:10–21; 26:2–29). Corinth and Athens were the principal centers of Greek oratorical skill and learning, and the Corinthians were accustomed to this type of speechmaking. No doubt this explains, in part, their appreciation of Apollos (Acts 18:24–28). Paul was apparently not trained in the art of speaking classical Greek and thus made no profession of being eloquent. Furthermore, to depend primarily on eloquence would tend to exalt the speaker rather than his message.

Not in knowledge. Paul laid claim to something of far greater importance than oratorical skill. He knew the mind and will of Christ, and had an understanding of spiritual truths necessary to salvation (1 Cor. 2:4–16; Gal. 1:12, 16; Eph. 3:3, 4, 18, 19). He knew Christ, whom to know is life everlasting. This truth transcends all other knowledge (John 17:3; 1 John 2:29; 3:5, 18, 24; 4:2; 5:18–20).

Made manifest. Or, “made evident,” “made plain.”

7. Committed an offence. In vs. 7–11 Paul gives consideration to the problem posed by critics of his self-supporting ministry to the Corinthians. He had previously written them on this subject, setting forth clearly the principles involved (1 Cor. 9:4–18). In harmony with the principles already laid down in the Scriptures by Christ, he had declared his full right to ministerial support such as the other apostles received (Matt. 10:7–10; Luke 10:7, 8). But he had voluntarily waived this right, in order to make evident that he was not tainted with mercenary motives (Acts 20:33; 2 Thess. 3:8, 9). His enemies, however, had seized upon this demonstration of self-sacrifice to impugn his motives; they construed it as evidence that he knew he did not deserve support and had thus tacitly admitted he was not a genuine apostle. Also, they probably thought him inconsistent in accepting support from believers in Macedonia (2 Cor. 11:9; Phil. 4:10); perhaps he had ulterior motives, and this seeming self-sacrifice in relation to the Corinthians was part of a scheme to take advantage of them. Paul wonders now whether he had done wrong in the course he took at Corinth, for the close fellowship he enjoyed with the believers at Philippi was lacking at Corinth. Usually he had worked at tentmaking in order to pay his expenses as an ambassador for Christ (Acts 18:3; cf. Acts

20:33–35; 1 Thess. 2:9). A worker for Christ is not wise to place himself under obligation to any church member by receiving money from such a member for his own use. The gospel ministry is dishonored if it is made the means for personal profit (cf. 1 Tim. 3:3). The good news of salvation is God’s free gift to man (Isa. 55:1, 2).

8. Robbed. Or, “despoiled.” Compared with the poorer churches of Macedonia, that of Corinth was relatively well to do (see on ch. 8:1). This verse is a sharp rebuke to the latter.

Wages. Gr. *opsōnion*, “[a soldier’s] pay,” or “allowance,” often rations rather than money (see on Luke 3:14; cf. Rom. 6:23; 1 Cor. 9:7). Paul does not mean that he took anything from the church at Philippi in a dishonest manner. The gifts he had received were given voluntarily, and represented a real sacrifice on the part of the givers. These gifts had made it possible for him to devote more of his time while at Corinth to establishing the church in that metropolis. Thus the Corinthians had been benefited, as it were, at the expense of the Macedonians; the preaching of the gospel had cost the Corinthians nothing because Paul was being supported by others (see 2 Cor. 11:9).

9. Wanted. That is, lacked, or was in want (see on Luke 15:14). During his ministry at Corinth Paul had exhausted his resources and lacked sufficient means to meet even his barest needs—while ministering to a prosperous church. Their indifference revealed a high degree of thoughtlessness, if not selfishness, and was without excuse. But even then Paul gave the Corinthians no indication of his need.

The situation was remedied, not by the Corinthian believers, as might have been expected, but by the opportune arrival of brethren from Macedonia with a further gift (see Phil. 4:10). The brethren referred to may have been Silas and Timothy (Acts 18:5).

Chargeable. Gr. *katanarkaō*, “to be burdensome.” Another form of the Greek word provides the name for a parasite fish that attaches itself to other creatures to secure nourishment from them. As a result the host suffers a state of numbness. Paul had not been a parasite, living off the Corinthians. He had not burdened them financially or otherwise. His ministry had not reduced them to a state of numbness, either spiritually or economically. To the contrary, he had inspired them, imparted life to them, invigorated them.

10. The truth of Christ. Paul solemnly asserts the truthfulness of his statement (see on Rom. 9:1; 2 Cor. 1:18). The presence of Christ in his life removes the possibility that he would misrepresent the facts (see Rom. 8:9–11; 1 Cor. 2:16; 2 Cor. 13:3; Gal. 2:20).

Stop. Or, “be silenced,” literally, “to be fenced in.” Paul was so certain of the wisdom of the plan of self-support that he had earlier declared he would rather die than incur the reputation of making a profit from those to whom he ministered (1 Cor. 9:15). This reveals how deeply he felt about this matter.

Regions of Achaia. Specific reference to this region, Greece proper, implies that his insistence upon abiding by the principle of self-support in his ministry was particularly necessary here. His enemies at Corinth would doubtless have made him out to be a parasite had he done otherwise. Apparently there was no danger of such a charge being made in Macedonia, where a deep spirit of fellowship existed between Paul and his converts. But at Corinth the situation was different.

11. Because. In vs. 11, 12 Paul explains why he has been unwilling to accept support from the Corinthian church. The statement of v. 11 implies that some of the Corinthians were jealous because of the preference Paul appeared to show for the Macedonians by

receiving their gifts, and concluded that he cared more for the Philippians than for them. But Paul denies that he ever felt cold or distant toward them. In fact, he often expressed his love for them and appealed for their love in return (1 Cor. 4:21; 13; 2 Cor. 2:4; 6:11–13; 8:7, 8; 12:15). In his letters and in his ministry to the Corinthians he had ever manifested deep affection.

12. Occasion. Gr. *aphormē*, a military term that denotes primarily a “base of operations.” Figuratively, it denotes the basis on which an action is taken, or the motive for it (see Rom. 7:8, 11; Gal. 5:13; 1 Tim. 5:14). Had Paul accepted money from the Corinthians, his enemies would have pointed to this as another “occasion” for condemning him. As it was, they had made his non-acceptance of Corinthian support a pretext for questioning his apostleship (see on 2 Cor. 11:7). Accordingly Paul was confronted with the alternatives of (1) waiving his right to support as an apostle (Luke 10:7), at the risk of appearing, on the one hand, to deny his apostleship (see on Matt. 17:24–27) and on the other, to show a lack of love for the Corinthians (see on 2 Cor. 11:11); and (2) accepting support and appearing to be preaching the gospel for gain. He will run the risk of the former, which he considers the lesser of two evils, in order to avoid the latter.

Even as we. It seems that these false apostles had accepted material support from the Corinthians (1 Cor. 9:7–13; 2 Cor. 11:20), and justified themselves on the basis of their supposed apostolic prerogatives. This privilege they denied to Paul. Although their claim to having rendered unselfish labor was false, they gloried in making it. But, if they really want to boast, says Paul, they should follow his policy of self-maintenance.

13. False apostles. Apparently they were, nominally, Christian Jews (v. 22) and claimed to be the apostles of Christ. Evidently, then, they had joined the Christian church (cf. Acts 15:1, 2, 5; Gal. 2:4, 5; Phil. 3:2, 3). But they were impostors, mere pretenders who had usurped the authority, rights, offices, and privileges of Christ’s true apostles. Lacking genuine credentials (see on 2 Cor. 3:3), they resorted to disguise and subterfuge.

Transforming. Gr. *metaschēmatizō*, “to change the appearance of,” often stressing, as here, the appearance of change in contrast with a genuine transformation (see on Matt. 17:2).

1. Satan. See on Matt. 4:1; see Additional Note on Mark 1.

Transformed. See on v. 13. Light is one of the supreme attributes of God and His holy angels (Matt. 28:2, 3; 1 Tim. 6:16; 1 John 1:5; Rev. 21:23, 24). Whenever and wherever God or His angels come, they shed light and dispel darkness (Acts 26:18; Col. 1:13). Darkness, on the contrary, represents evil and its author, Satan (Luke 22:53; 2 Cor. 6:14; Eph. 6:12). See on John 1:4–9. From the beginning Satan has been studiously disguising himself the better to lure men away from Christ.

Light. Satan was once an angel of light. His name was Lucifer, which means “light bearer” (Isa. 14:12–14; Eze. 28:13–19). Rebellion against God actually transformed him into an angel of darkness, and the angels who sided with him took up their abode in the realms of darkness (2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6).

15. If his ministers. The argument is from the greater to the less. As Satan deceives, so do his representatives. In the sight of Heaven there can be nothing more heinous than for professing ministers of Christ to serve as agents of Satan. Often they can be known only by their fruits (Matt. 7:16–20; 12:33–37).

Whose end. That all hypocrites, impostors, and deceivers should ultimately be unmasked is necessary for the full revelation of God's character and justice before the entire universe. At that day all men, righteous and wicked, saved and lost, will proclaim that God is righteous (Rev. 15:4).

16. Think me a fool. With a strong protest to the Corinthians, to his enemies, and to himself that it is nothing short of foolishness, he engages in "boasting" (see on v. 1). That it is repugnant to him to do so proves he is not a fool. Christ also referred to His good deeds in confirmation of His claims (John 10:32, 37, 38; 15:24). Paul apparently felt that, however much he might personally dislike to "boast"—as his defense of his ministry may be called—he must do so to meet the false charges of the false apostles at Corinth.

Receive me. That is, listen to me.

17. Not after the Lord. As elsewhere (1 Cor. 7:6, 12, 25; 2 Cor. 8:8). Paul denies that what he is about to say is by divine command. He speaks simply in self-defense. Had Paul not made this point clear, he might, by doing so, seem to have justified his enemies in their habitual boasting. Paul would have his reason for boasting clearly understood. Perhaps from the outward point of view, Paul's defense of himself may appear foolish. This he recognizes (see on ch. 11:1, 16). But from the point of view of his motives he is fully justified in doing so.

18. Many glory. "Many" in the Corinthian church were apparently impressed by glorying "after the flesh," that is, by emphasis on ancestry, rank, reputation, and similar external advantages. They did so from selfish motives; but Paul's motives were worthy.

After the flesh. That is, after things that appeal to worldly-minded men.

I will glory also. See on ch. 10:8.

19. Ye suffer fools. Paul speaks ironically. The Corinthians had an exalted opinion of their own wisdom and mental discernment. Yet they not only tolerated but accepted the authority of fools, on the supposed merits of their own proud boasting. This being so, they should certainly not find it difficult to accept Paul's boasting. According to their standards, he had much to boast about.

Wise. Paul speaks half in irony, half seriously.

20. Suffer. In modern English, "endure patiently."

Bring you into bondage. Paul here exposes and condemns the highhanded methods of the pseudo apostles at Corinth. Titus had evidently reported to Paul concerning the harsh and tyrannical authority exercised by these false leaders. This contrasted sharply with Paul's treatment of the Corinthians, which had been marked by love and kindness. Five expressions are used to describe the nature and work of these false apostles.

The false apostles made virtual slaves of those who accepted them (cf. Matt. 23:4; Gal. 2:4; 4:9; 5:1, 13; 1 Peter 5:2, 3). Instead of bringing freedom, false teachings and false doctrines make mental and spiritual slaves of men. Truth makes men free (John 8:32, 36). The work of false teachers and religious leaders is to make themselves lords of the church by controlling the minds and hearts of men. The work of true leaders is to lead men to Christ and not to themselves.

Devour you. See on Matt. 23:14. The false apostles worked for money and worldly gain. They sheared the sheep instead of feeding them. They were inspired and motivated by selfish greed, so much so that they devoured the substance of the Corinthians. They were hirelings.

Take of you. That is, catch you, or take advantage of you. Apparently, these false leaders were outright deceivers, and had entrapped the Corinthians. Wise as they were (v. 19), the latter had been made dupes.

Exalt himself. It was characteristic of these false apostles to assume great authority. By boasting and pompous utterances they arrogated to themselves lordship over the church.

Smite you. This pictures the depths of disgrace to which the Corinthians had been subjected. In the Bible such an act is pictured as a mark of the utmost contempt (1 Kings 22:24; Neh. 13:25; cf. Isa. 58:4; Matt. 5:39; Titus. 1:7). Both Christ and Paul knew what it was to experience this form of treatment (Luke 22:64; Acts 23:2; cf. 1 Tim. 3:3). No greater insult could be offered to a man. In doing so—figuratively at least—these men have proved themselves false leaders and false apostles. They have no sense of the value of souls, or even respect for the rights of others.

21. Concerning reproach. Literally, “according to disgrace,” or “by way of disgrace.” Whether Paul speaks of his own disgrace or that of his opponents is not entirely clear. The “reproach” is obviously connected in some way with his having exhibited what had been taken as weakness.

Some Bible expositors believe that Paul is saying that if he had erred in being too humble and too patient with them, he would now seek to remove this false impression that he was “weak” by a statement of his own pre-eminence as to ancestry, position, and sufferings in comparison with those of his opponents. Those who hold this view, point to the use of the Greek aorist tense in many manuscripts, instead of the perfect tense. This would point to some single event in the past, some manifestation of weakness during a previous visit to the church at Corinth. Paul himself makes reference to such an occasion (2 Cor. 2:1; 10:10; 12:7–10, 21; cf. Gal. 4:13–15). He is not a man to avoid acknowledging his limitations. He puts on no false front to hide his weaknesses. Boasting is not natural to him. But if his patience is to be construed as weakness, he will show that he can be “bold also.”

Other Bible expositors interpret Paul’s statement in 2 Cor. 11:21 as ironical. In comparison with the tyrannical methods of his opponents (v. 20), Paul and his co-laborers would appear “weak.” “Of course I am ‘weak,’” he may be imagined as saying, “for I am not given to displaying my authority.”

22. Hebrews. This verse definitely identifies Paul’s opponents in the church at Corinth as Jews. Throughout their history the Jews had come to believe in their superiority as a race and as the chosen people of God (Deut. 7:6; Amos 3:2; John 8:33–39). The three designations here used are synonymous. Here Paul refutes the claim that his opponents had the advantage over him on this point (see Acts 22:3; Phil. 3:3–5).

For the origin of the term “Hebrew” see on Gen. 10:21. Its use here suggests the antiquity of their origin as a people, as distinguished from other nations. Originally, it distinguished the descendants of Eber (Gen. 11:16) as a race. After the Captivity it came to refer also to the Aramaic language, the common language of Palestine in Paul’s day (see Vol. I, pp. 25, 29, 30). Though born abroad, Paul had learned Aramaic, and this reflected his respect for, and adherence to, Hebrew traditions. The Hellenistic Jews of the Dispersion commonly spoke Greek and used the Greek translation of the OT, the LXX. Because Paul was born outside of Palestine, in Tarsus, the capital of Cilicia, and because

he spoke Greek, his opponents—Palestinian Jews—doubtless classed him as a Hellenist, and thus less loyal to Judaism than they supposed themselves to be.

The difference between the Christian Jew and the orthodox Jew of NT times should also be noted. Paul's opponents belonged to the former group. They had joined the Christian church and sought office as Christian leaders. They regarded themselves as superior to Gentile converts and insisted upon preserving this distinction. Paul, however, recognized no difference between Jew and Gentile with respect to salvation and standing before God (Rom 1:14; 2:25–29; 3:29, 30; 10:12; Gal. 3:28, 29; 5:6; Eph. 2:14; Col. 3:11).

The conflict between Paul and these false Jewish Christian apostles at Corinth was only part of a larger conflict that arose in the early Christian church at various times and places (see Acts 10:28; 15:1, 2, 5; Gal. 2:1–9, 11–14). It was most difficult even for the converted Jew to consent to the abolition of the “middle wall of partition” (Eph. 2:14), and to escape a certain feeling of hostility toward Gentiles because they had not been born Jews. This attitude, built up by the Jews, largely through the centuries since the Captivity, was a perversion of God's purpose for His chosen people (see John 10:16; Eph. 2:14, 15; Vol. IV, pp. 32, 33). It was very difficult, even for the disciples, to liberate their minds from the steely shackles of this narrow, bigoted spirit (Acts 10:9–17, 28; 11:1–18; Gal. 2:12).

When Paul wrote the epistle now known as 1 Corinthians, the church at Corinth was troubled by various factions (see on 1 Cor. 1:12). Although by the time the second epistle was written, a few weeks or months later (see p. 822), the majority of the church membership had been fully reconciled to the apostle (see 2 Cor. 7:5–15; see on vs. 13, 15), certain false apostles persisted in working against him (see ch. 10:2). It is to this minority that the apostle directs a severe rebuke in his second epistle, most particularly in chs. 10 to 13.

Although Paul makes it clear that this minority was composed of Jews (ch. 11:22), he does not identify them as belonging to the Judaizing faction of the Christian church nor does he discuss their heretical teachings. From this silence some have inferred that they were not Judaizers. However, the general consensus of opinion is that this opposition was of a Judaizing type. Its leaders were Christian Jews who apparently claimed to be better Jews and more loyal to Judaism than Paul (chs. 10:7; 11:22). They also claimed to be “apostles of Christ” (v. 13) and “ministers of Christ” (v. 23), and denied that Paul was either a true apostle (cf. chs. 11:15; 12:11, 12) or a true representative of Christ (ch. 11:23). But they were, in fact, “false apostles” (v. 13) and “ministers” of unrighteousness (v. 15). These characteristics are typical of the Judaizing faction of the early church but of no other clearly defined group of Paul's time, and it is therefore reasonable to assume that they were Judaizers.

For further comment on the Judaizing party in the early Christian church see p. 33. For the attempted subversion of the Galatian churches by this faction—at this very time—see p. 933.

To deny the superiority of the Jews, in God's sight, is not to deny the superiority of the divine revelation accorded the Jews (Rom. 3:1, 2; 9:1–5). In contrast with the Gentile convert, the Jew had been trained from infancy in the worship of the one true God and in the knowledge of the Scriptures. Generally speaking, the nucleus of the Christian believers in each community came from the Jewish synagogue, for Paul began his

preaching of the gospel in the local synagogue. The Jews naturally felt entitled to special consideration and privileges in the Christian church, and considered themselves better fitted for leadership. Their comparative religious maturity would obviously give them an advantage over the religious immaturity of the Gentiles. But their attitude and their abuse of authority, in various instances, had resulted in a religion of self-righteousness, which was abhorrent both to God and to man (Luke 18:10–14).

Israelites. For a discussion of the term “Israel” see on Gen. 32:28. “Israel” designates the Hebrews as the elect of God and distinguishes between those in the chosen line of descent from Abraham and his numerous other descendants (Gen. 21:12; Rom. 9:10–13; Gal. 4:22–31). In their role as God’s chosen people the Israelites had enjoyed special blessings and privileges (Rom. 9:4, 5; Vol. V, pp. 27–29). The name occurs only three times elsewhere in the NT (John 1:47; Rom. 9:4; 11:1).

Seed of Abraham. This was considered the most honorable title of the three. To be a true son of Abraham meant to be taken into covenant relationship with God (Gen. 17:7; Gal. 4:22–26), to experience righteousness by faith (Rom. 4; Gal. 3:6–9, 14–16), to belong to the race through which the Messiah was to come (Gal. 3:16), and to inherit the exalted promises given to him as father of the Hebrew race (Gal. 3:14–18). But the Jews failed to distinguish between having the blood of Abraham in their veins and having the faith of Abraham in their hearts and minds (Gen. 21:10; Matt. 3:9; John 8:33–53; Rom. 2:28, 29; Gal. 3:28, 29). Paul’s opponents possessed only the physical qualifications, and this fact justified no claim to superiority in the Christian church (Gal. 5:2–6).

23. Are they ministers? Professing to be converted Jews, they claimed to be spokesmen for Christ. Paul denied their claim (vs. 13–15). As a Jew, Paul was equal with them. But on the point of relationship to Christ, which is the fundamental test in any age (1 John 4:2, 3), Paul claims superiority. Thus, taking them at their own evaluation, he is far beyond them. As evidence he points to labors far surpassing theirs in self-sacrifice, in extent, and in results. They sought to usurp the fruits of Paul’s labors (2 Cor. 10:15, 16).

A fool. Literally, “one void of understanding,” “one out of his mind,” “one insane.” The Greek word is much stronger than that used in vs. 16, 19. Paul here speaks ironically—he is employing the foolish methods of his opponents. It also expresses his own disgust at having to resort to this kind of thing. He cannot continue boasting without expressing his own disapproval of doing so.

Labours more abundant. Paul had toiled long and arduously to bring the gospel to the Gentiles. What had these Judaizers done in comparison?

Stripes. A common experience with Paul (cf. Acts 16:22, 23).

In prisons. The Bible does not record the number of times Paul was imprisoned (cf. Acts 16:23). Clement of Rome observes that Paul was imprisoned seven times (*The First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians* 5).

Deaths. That is, the many occasions on which he came face to face with death, and it appeared he would not survive (Acts 14:19; Rom. 8:36; 1 Cor. 15:31; 2 Cor. 4:11; see on 1 Cor. 15:29).

24. Forty stripes. See on Matt. 10:17. Reference here is to a Jewish form of punishment provided for by Jewish law (Josephus *Antiquities* iv. 8. 21 [238]; see on Deut. 25:1–3). There is no record anywhere of these beatings inflicted upon Paul. Such beatings were usually administered in the Jewish synagogue (see Vol. V, p. 56; see on

Matt. 10:17). Paul had been responsible for many Christians being beaten (Acts 22:19). Christ had been beaten twice (see on Matt. 27:26).

25. Beaten with rods. A Roman form of punishment. To rule with “a rod of iron” denoted extreme severity (Rev. 2:27). The rods were the slender staves, the official insignia, of Roman lictors, or magistrates. The only recorded instance of such a beating occurred at Philippi (Acts 16:22, 23). At Jerusalem he claimed exemption on the basis of being a Roman citizen (Acts 22:24, 25).

The suffering and persecution enumerated in 2 Cor. 11:23–27 occurred between the incidents recorded in Acts 9 and those in Acts 19. The worst was yet to come. This recital gives some idea of what Paul meant by sharing with Christ “the fellowship of his sufferings” (Phil. 3:10). And how much of Paul’s dangerous living for Christ is hidden from view!

Stoned. The stoning at Lystra is recorded in Acts 14:19, 20.

Shipwreck. Five sea voyages are recorded in Acts, but nothing is said of shipwreck prior to that of Acts 27. The shipwreck en route to Rome came long after the writing of this epistle (Acts 27:41–44).

In the deep. That is, at sea.

26. In journeyings often. Paul seems to have been constantly on the move sowing the seeds of the gospel. He proved himself a true, devoted minister of Christ by continually exposing himself to perils. How different from his Judaizing opponents!

Waters. Literally, “rivers.” There would be few bridges along most of the highways and byways Paul traveled. He would have to ford the rivers. Most of what we know as Asia Minor, Greece, and Macedonia is mountainous, and many an unbridged mountain torrent would constitute a dangerous obstacle.

Robbers. Every road, except perhaps the great Roman highways, was infested with robbers. An example of this is found in the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30). His own country of Cilicia, and the whole region round about, was infested with pirates and robbers. A few years before the time of Christ, Rome was compelled to send out an expedition against them under the leadership of Pompey.

Mine own countrymen. Paul’s greatest enemies were those of his own race. In practically all the principal cities where Paul labored, his fiercest opposition came from the Jews. This had been the case at Damascus (Acts 9:23; 2 Cor. 11:32), at Antioch in Pisidia (Acts 13:50, 51), at Iconium (ch. 14:2–5), at Lystra (ch. 14:19, 20), at Thessalonica (ch. 17:5–9), at Berea (ch. 17:13, 14), at Corinth (ch. 18:12–17), and at Jerusalem (ch. 21:27–31).

Heathen. That is, Gentiles, as at Philippi (Acts 16:19–24) and Ephesus (ch. 19:23–30).

In the city. As, for instance, at Philippi (Acts 16:19–40), at Corinth (ch. 18:12–17), and more recently at Ephesus (ch. 19:23–41).

Wilderness. As, for instance, the thinly populated regions of Galatia and the wild, rugged areas of Cilicia, Macedonia, and Illyricum.

In the sea. See on v. 25.

False brethren. The Judaizers—Christian Jews—were Paul’s most relentless enemies. They constituted the most painful and frustrating peril among all those he had to face (Phil. 3:18).

27. In weariness. The first two words refer specifically to the taxing physical work in which Paul found it necessary to engage (1 Thess. 2:9; 2 Thess. 3:8). To work at evangelism as Paul did was, in itself, a full-time task, and the time and energy taken to support himself were beyond what would be considered normal for any man. Consequently he must have often sacrificed sleep in order to have time for preaching (Acts 20:31) and for private devotions (1 Thess. 3:10). Paul was now but slightly past the mid-point of his 20 years of recorded public ministry, and the 10 most difficult years of suffering and persecution still lay ahead of him. What he records here is only a small part of what he endured for Christ's sake.

Watchings. Or, "sleeplessness," owing to extreme weariness, to concern for the welfare of the churches, or in order to work at tentmaking.

Hunger ... fastings. The context implies that Paul has in mind some kind of suffering imposed upon him by circumstances beyond his control. This would hardly be true of the ceremonial fasts of the Jews, or of voluntary fasting. Perhaps by "hunger" Paul refers to an inadequate diet, and by "fastings" to occasions when he had nothing whatever to eat.

Cold and nakedness. Perhaps Paul had, at times, lacked sufficient clothing in the mountainous regions of central Asia Minor, or perhaps he had suffered robbery.

28. That are without. Literally, "in addition," that is, in addition to the taxing duties connected with his ministry, or possibly other trials in addition to those mentioned in vs. 23–27. All these trials are incidental to his lifework for the churches.

Care. Gr. *merimna*, "anxiety," "anxious care" (cf. on Matt. 6:25). Paul here refers to the problems that constantly arose and that seemed to occupy so much of his time, as, for instance, the writing of his epistles, the personal counseling of sin-burdened souls, the answering of doctrinal questions that needed clarification, his frequent meetings with the leaders of the churches, and his constant efforts to strengthen the churches and their members.

29. Who is weak? Paul sought to be "all things to all men" (1 Cor. 9:22). The true Christian will make no display of what superior strength he may have in order to impress others who are weak. Men conscious of their own weakness seek counsel of those who not only possess strength but who know how to use it with tenderness and understanding. Knowing how much he had been forgiven, realizing his own weaknesses, Paul knew how to forgive and to be patient with the weaknesses of others. He was able to share the fears and failures, the trials and weaknesses, of other men with true understanding. His surpassing spiritual strength found expression in surpassing gentleness. Nothing tends so to discourage others as a cold, harsh, dogmatic dealing with their difficulties.

Offended. Literally, "to be trapped," that is, into sin or discouragement (see on Matt. 5:29).

I burn not. Or, "I am not incensed," or "I am not indignant."

30. Must needs glory. Or, "boast." How different is Paul from his self-asserting, self-authoritative opponents, who exalted themselves at the expense of others.

Infirmities. Or, "weaknesses," not of character but those resulting from his incessant labors, the sufferings of vs. 23–28 (cf. ch. 12:9).

31. God and Father. Not two beings, but one, God the Father. Paul solemnly places himself, as it were, under oath.

Blessed for evermore. See on Rom. 9:5.

I lie not. This most solemn oath is something unique in Paul's writings. At other times he makes strong affirmations (Rom. 1:9; Gal. 1:20; 1 Thess. 2:5), but none of these can be compared with this one in strength, solemnity, expression, and appeal. Whether Paul refers to what precedes—to his firm purpose to restrict his boasting to his "infirmities"—or to what follows, whether to the incident at Damascus or to the first part of ch. 12, concerning divine revelations, is not clear. Perhaps he refers to both what precedes and what follows. Apparently he realized that some, at least, would doubt the sincerity of his statements.

32. Governor. Gr. *ethnarchēs*, literally, "ruler of the people."

Aretas. Historical records reveal that Syria, including Damascus, had been a Roman province since about 64 B.C., prior to which it had been subject to the Nabataeans. How Aretas IV, an independent king of Nabataea who reigned from 9 B.C. to A.D. 39 (see The Journeys of Paul; Vol. V, pp. 38, 64), could have been in control of Damascus at the time to which Paul refers is not known. It is possible that the emperor may have assigned the city to Aretas for a time to secure his friendship or for other political reasons now unknown. Aretas could hardly have taken it from the Romans by force. See on Acts 9:24. For the bearing of the information of v. 32 upon the chronology of the life of Paul see p. 97.

Desirous to apprehend. That is, at the instigation of the Jews (Acts 9:23–25; see on 2 Cor. 11:26).

33. Through a window. Compare Joshua 2:15; 1 Sam. 19:11, 12. Evidently the house stood atop the wall and had a small window or opening on the outside.

Basket. Gr. *sarganē*, a braided rope, a basket made of braided rope. See on Acts 9:24, 25.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

2 GC 381

32 MM 113; 5T 297

52 AA 388

7–10AA 350

9 4T 409

9, 102 3T 319

12–15AA 350

13–155T 297

142 CT 134; CW 152; Ev 359, 360, 364, 365, 604, 607, 609; EW 88, 261, 263; FE 176, 258, 471; GC 524, 588, 624; MH 440; ML 321, 323; MM 95, 101; MYP 51, 57, 236, 454; Te 285; TM 236, 333, 366; 1T 290, 341; 2T 172, 287, 458; 3T 374, 437, 456, 483; 4T 207, 623; 5T 80, 137, 140, 198, 573, 624; 7T 165; 8T 294, 306; 9T 68; WM 292

23–27AA 296

252 AA 575

26, 272 Ed 67; SR 313; 2T 628

282 AA 323

CHAPTER 12

1 *For commending of his apostleship, though he might glory of his wonderful revelations, 9 yet he rather chooseth to glory of his infirmities, 11 blaming them for forcing him to this vain boasting. 14 He promiseth to come to them again: but yet altogether in the affection of a father, 20 although he feareth he shall to his grief find many offenders, and publick disorders there.*

1. It is not expedient. Or, “It is not profitable.” Paul’s defense of his ministry, begun in ch. 10:1, continues without interruption. Thus far, as evidence, he has called attention to his personal experiences as a minister—his life, his conduct, and his sufferings for Christ’s sake. Now he turns to what is perhaps the greatest evidence of all—his direct and personal communication with his resurrected Lord, Jesus Christ, and supernatural experiences transcending anything experienced by his opponents.

Doubtless to glory. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the reading “It is necessary to boast,” meaning “I must boast.” Again Paul expresses his reluctance to engage in what many would consider boasting (see on ch. 10:8). But circumstances have made it necessary for him to do so in order to vindicate his apostleship and his message. To fail to clarify the issue would be equivalent to denying his apostleship and dishonoring the gospel, and Christ, whose servant he claims to be. It is improper and unprofitable for a Christian to boast, since all he is and has comes by the grace of God. Boasting exalts the ego and leads a man into temptation. The Christian’s testimony is never of himself but of Christ.

Visions. Gr. *optasiai*, “sights.” As Paul speaks of supernatural experiences he also reveals a spirit of humility and dependence upon God. There is no exaltation of self.

Revelations. Gr. *apokalypseis*, “[acts of] manifestation” stressing the method of revelation. In the Bible it refers to things that cannot be discovered by the natural powers of the mind, and would otherwise remain unknown by man (see Job 11:7; John 1:18; Rom. 11:33; 1 Tim. 6:16), because sin has separated him from God. But through Christ the breach between man and God has been bridged, and the Creator can again communicate with His creatures. Paul frequently received direct personal communication from God (Acts 9:4–6; 16:9; 18:9; 22:17, 18; 23:11; 27:23; Gal. 2:2). The phrase, “of the Lord,” indicates the source of what Paul saw. Such a sight may be seen by the eye of the mind whether the recipient is asleep or awake.

2. I knew a man. That Paul is speaking of himself is evident from (1) the fact that this reference to visions is in the midst of an account of events connected with his own life and ministry; (2) the fact that in v. 7 he designates these visions and revelations as made directly to himself; and (3) the fact that he uses the third person in order to avoid the appearance of boasting. John, on account of his Christian modesty and humility, similarly avoided identifying himself (John 13:23, 24; 19:26; 21:20).

Fourteen years ago. Some 20 years or more before, Paul had met Christ on the Damascus road (Acts 9:1–7). The date of this epistle is about 57 A.D. Fourteen years previous would be about the time Barnabas brought Paul to Antioch (Acts 11:25, 26). For a tentative chronology of Paul’s life and ministry see pp. 97–102.

⁴Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (2 Co 9:1). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.

Whether in the body. In vision there is complete absence of sensibility to earthly surroundings. The perception of things seen and heard in vision, and at times participation in the scenes presented, are fully as real to the consciousness as the normal sensory experiences of life.

Third heaven. Or, “paradise” (v. 4; see on Luke 23:43). The first “heaven” of Scripture is the atmosphere, the second is that of the stars, and the third the abode of God and heavenly beings. Paul was “caught up” to the presence of God.

3. I knew such a man. Probably a repetition for emphasis.

4. Paradise. See on Luke 23:43.

Unspeakable. Gr. *arrhēta*, “unsaid,” “unspoken,” “unspeakable.”

It is not lawful. Literally, either “it is not permitted,” or “it is not possible.” Either Paul had been instructed not to reveal what he saw and heard or human language was inadequate to describe it. Compare 1 Cor. 3:2.

5. Will I glory. That is, boast. Paul had every right, humanly speaking, to boast of being signally honored by God, of having special and direct access to the divine presence. He could have used this as a basis for claiming special honor and authority, but did not do so. He chose to keep self out of view.

Yet of myself. Although the experience marked Paul as the recipient of special honor from God, he realized that it was no credit to him personally (see 1 Tim. 1:15), and refused to take any credit to himself for it.

Mine infirmities. See on v. 9.

6. Though I would desire. Paul may have been inclined to say more regarding the supernatural revelations he had received. From a human point of view he certainly had every reason to “glory” in so uncommon an honor, but humbly and wisely he forbore to do so. His only reason for even mentioning the experience is by way of answering the charges of his opponents. He appeals, therefore, only to his personal life and character, with which they are well acquainted. This will be sufficient evidence of his apostleship, if they are disposed to give it consideration.

7. Lest I should be exalted. A statement Paul repeats, for emphasis, at the end of the verse. God saw fit to protect Paul against himself.

Thorn. Gr. *skolops*, “a pointed piece of wood,” “a pale,” “a sharp stake.” The papyri also uses the word to refer to a splinter, or sliver, driven into the flesh and impossible to get out. The usual NT word for thorn is *akantha* (Matt. 13:22; 27:29; etc.).

In the flesh. The infirmity was bodily, not spiritual or mental. It was apparently something prominent, which caused him considerable embarrassment as well as discomfort and inconvenience. It was evidently some affliction that affected the eyes (Gal. 4:13–15; see EGW Supplementary Material on ch. 12:7–9).

The messenger of Satan. Or, “an angel of Satan.” The affliction was of Satan, but permitted by God. Thus it was with Job (Job 1:6–12; 2:7; cf. Luke 13:16). It is of Satan’s nature and work to inflict bodily suffering and disease.

To buffet. Literally, “to strike with the fist,” and thus “to treat with violence.” Compare the same word in Matt. 26:67; 1 Cor. 4:11; 1 Peter 2:20. Satan’s purpose was to annoy Paul and hinder his work. Christ’s purpose in permitting the affliction was to protect Paul from pride.

Lest I should be. Important textual evidence (cf. p. 10) may be cited for the omission of the last clause of this verse.

8. Besought. Gr. *parakaleō* (see on Matt. 5:4).

Thrice. On three particular occasions Paul had pleaded with God to remove this distressing affliction. But when the answer was clear he accepted it as the will of God for him. Compare the three times Christ prayed for the removal of the cup He was to drink, and then accepted it as the will of God (Matt. 26:39–44).

9. He said. The form of the verb in Greek denotes the finality of God's answer.

Grace. Gr. *charis* (see on Rom. 3:24).

Sufficient. In the Greek this word is in the emphatic position. Paul's prayer did not bring the apostle release from his affliction, but it did provide him with grace to endure it. Paul doubtless appealed for deliverance from his infirmity on the basis that it was a hindrance to his ministry. Christ more than meets his need with an abundant provision of grace. God has never promised to alter circumstances or release men from trouble. To Him, bodily infirmities and untoward circumstances are matters of secondary concern. Inward strength to endure is a far higher manifestation of the divine grace than mastery of the outward difficulties of life. Outwardly a man may be torn, worn, wearied, and almost broken, yet inwardly it is his privilege—in Christ—to enjoy perfect peace (see on Isa. 26:3, 4).

Glory in my infirmities. Or, "boast in weaknesses." It is the mark of triumph to accept one's limitations without resentment. To rejoice over that which one hates and desires to be rid of is the ultimate of surrender. Christ also shrank from the indignity, shame, and ridicule He was called upon to endure at His trial. Such resignation to the will of God means complete renunciation of self (1 Cor. 2:3–5).

Rest. Or, "abide," "dwell." Paul here speaks of the power of Christ descending upon him, working within him, and giving him help and strength.

10. I take pleasure. It pleased the Lord, therefore it would please Paul also. God knew best, and Paul was content that it should be so.

Necessities. Or, "distresses," "hardships," "straits."

Then am I strong. The Christian paradox is that occasions of weakness may be transformed into occasions of strength. Defeat can always be turned into victory. Real strength of character grows out of weakness, which, in distrust of self, is surrendered to the will of God. A man strong in his own strength tends to be self-reliant instead of relying on God, and often does not realize his need of divine grace. The great heroes of the Bible learned the same lesson, men such as Noah, Abraham, Moses, Elijah, Daniel. Only those whose weakness and insecurity have been completely submerged in the blessed will of God know what it is to possess true power.

11. A fool. See on ch. 11:16.

In glorifying. Textual evidence attests (cf. p. 10) the omission of this phrase.

Compelled me. It was the tendency of the Corinthian Christians to believe the slanderous statements of the false apostles, which had made it necessary for Paul to speak as positively and plainly as he does in chs. 10 to 12.

Commended of you. That is, by you. Instead of being so ready to believe the false apostles, the Corinthians should have rallied to his defense.

Chiefest apostles. See on ch. 11:5. In any comparison with the boastful, self-appointed apostles of Corinth, Paul was at least equal.

Though I be nothing. In comparison with his Lord, Paul was nothing—as his infirmities so eloquently testified. He knew well that the many evidences of his apostleship were evidences of the power of God operating in his life. If left to himself, he would long ago have fallen by the wayside.

12. Signs of an apostle. These consisted of his self-sacrificing ministry (ch. 11:7–12), his perseverance in the face of surpassing obstacles (vs. 23–27), his visions and revelations (ch. 12:1–6), and his triumph over personal affliction (vs. 7–10). Above all, the Christian experience of Paul’s converts testified to the genuineness of his apostleship (1 Cor. 9:2; 2 Cor. 3:2).

In all patience. Paul’s miracles were performed without fanfare, in order that men might recognize that the power was of God.

Signs. Gr. *sēmeia*, “miracles” (see Vol. V, p. 208). In the early church, miracles were regarded as one of the chief credentials of genuine apostleship (Acts 5:12; 15:12; Rom. 15:18, 19; 1 Cor. 2:4, 5; Gal. 2:8; Heb. 2:4).

Wonders. Gr. *terata* (see Vol. V, p. 208).

Mighty deeds. Gr. *denamies* (see Vol. V, p. 208).

13. Were inferior. The Corinthians had enjoyed all the advantages and benefits that a true apostle of Christ could bring them—teaching, preaching, miracles, letters, and help in organization—all without charge. In all these things his critics were wanting. They excelled Paul only in having taken the money of the Corinthians, and having boasted of their own prowess. He who had the most right to boast and to receive material compensation refused either to boast or to claim financial compensation.

14. The third time. Paul’s first visit to Corinth is recorded in Acts 18:1. There is no record of another visit intervening between that visit and the one the apostle expects to make in the near future. Grammatically it is possible to understand “the third time” as applying either to his readiness to come or to the actual coming itself. Those who favor the former suggest that the second visit never materialized, and that although this is the third time he has laid plans to visit Corinth, it will in reality be only his second visit there. On the whole, his first visit, when he founded the church, had been joyful and successful. Those who favor the latter find a second visit prior to the writing of 2 Corinthians repeatedly implied in this epistle—a brief, painful, and humiliating experience that Paul hoped would not be repeated when he should come again (see on 2 Cor. 2:1; cf. ch. 12:21). The only time for such a visit would have been during the three years he had recently devoted to the raising up of a church at Ephesus. If such a visit occurred it was, in all probability, occasioned by the refusal of the church at Corinth to follow his instructions in previous epistles (see p. 822; see on ch. 13:1).

Not be burdensome. That is, financially. Paul would continue his policy of self-support.

Not your’s, but you. It was concern for the Corinthians themselves, not for their possessions, that motivated Paul. On the contrary, the false apostles seem to have taken more interest in their possessions. Paul’s interest lay exclusively in helping the Corinthians to secure possession of the treasures of heaven and to turn their eyes away from the baubles of earth (see on Matt. 6:19–34; John 6:27). He would not and could not take anything from them by way of material support till he was sure of their hearts. Thus it is with God, who always takes the initiative (Ps. 27:8; John 4:23; Rom. 5:8).

Parents for the children. Paul defends his stand on the basis of analogy. His relationship to the Corinthians was that of a spiritual father to children in the faith (1 Cor. 4:14, 15). They were still immature Christians, “babes in Christ” (1 Cor. 3:1, 2). Paul does not teach that children should not provide for their parents; the fifth commandment clearly implies that they should. But during childhood and youth the primary responsibility is necessarily with the parents.

15. Spend and be spent. Literally, “spend and be outspent,” that is, exhaust his resources. In Greek the second verb is much stronger than the first. Paul would give them everything he had, including himself.

For you. Literally, “for your souls.” Paul’s primary concern was not for their physical welfare. The apostle is thinking of “that meat which endureth unto everlasting life” (John 6:27), of food for the mind and food for the soul. The cost of such food in time, energy, planning, and sacrifice is far greater than for physical food. In the nurture of spiritual life great sacrifice is often necessary. It requires the unreserved dedication of all that a man is and has to God, in the service of his fellow men (Phil. 2:17).

The less I be loved. How often the truest of love is unappreciated. Had Paul done less for them they might have appreciated him more! See ch. 11:7.

16. Being crafty. In vs. 16–19 Paul emphatically denies having made any gain from them, either openly or in a crafty, underhanded way. He apparently supposes his enemies to say, “Grant that Paul did not take money from you directly. But did he not do it indirectly when he sent Titus to gather funds for the great collection [chs. 8; 9]? How do you know that he is not secretly rewarding himself and his companions out of this fund?”

Caught you. As a hunter takes his game. Commentators generally hold that Paul here quotes what his enemies were saying.

Guile. Or, “craft,” “deceit,” literally, “bait” (cf. chs. 4:2; 11:3).

17. Make a gain. Paul challenges his opponents to produce evidence that he has taken advantage of the Corinthians, either directly or through his co-workers. Several of the latter had labored with him at Corinth or, when he was laboring elsewhere, had been sent there as bearers of epistles or as his personal representatives (Acts 18:1–5; 1 Cor. 16:15–18; 2 Cor. 1:19; 2 Cor. 7:6; 12:18).

18. Desired. Gr. *parakaleō* (see on Matt. 5:4).

Titus. Paul was now in Macedonia, journeying toward Corinth, and had but recently welcomed Titus on his way back from Corinth (see on ch. 7:5–7). Titus had been sent to Corinth to win back the confidence of the disaffected Corinthians, and had returned with a good report. There was no evidence that he or the unnamed brother who went with him had taken advantage of them. Apparently Titus had followed the example of Paul and supported himself during his stay at Corinth. His worthy example when he first worked there with Paul had won their respect, affection, and complete confidence (chs. 7:7, 13–15; 8:6). The record of his mission was one of success. Obviously, none of the Corinthians would charge Titus with having made a profit at their expense.

19. Again. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the reading “of old,” or “all the time,” that is, throughout the section in which Paul has been defending his ministry.

Excuse. Or, “justify,” “defend.” It is commonly used in the NT as a legal term for the defense made in court by the accused (see Luke 21:14; Acts 19:33; 24:10; 26:1; see on 4:10). Paul was now through “boasting” (2 Cor. 10:1 to 2 Cor. 12:13). An attempt to defend oneself is often interpreted as evidence of guilt and weakness. Paul anticipates

that some of the Corinthians may form this erroneous impression. Do some of the Corinthians think that Paul's objective is merely to win back their esteem and affection on a personal basis?

We speak before God. Paul's defense was not simply to clarify differences that had arisen between them, but to discharge his responsibility toward God as an ambassador of Christ. He was dutybound to do everything within his power to win the Corinthians back from a wrong course (cf. 1 Cor. 2:15; 4:3). The Corinthians must take the right attitude toward Paul if they are to be free from the pseudo apostles who are leading them astray.

For your edifying. In making his defense Paul does not think of any advantage that will accrue to him, but only of their spiritual welfare. It is all for their sakes.

20. I fear. Paul does not exercise his apostolic authority as if he were a prince over the church, but speaks in a fatherly way, listing the sins that have distracted and divided the Corinthian church.

Debates. Or, "contentions," "strifes," "wranglings" (cf. 1 Cor. 1:11; 3:3; 1 Tim. 6:4).

Envyings. Or, "jealousies," "rivalries" (cf. Acts 17:5; 1 Cor. 3:3; James 3:14, 16).

Wraths. Or, "[outbursts of] anger" (cf. Luke 4:28; Acts 19:28).

Strifes. Such things as putting oneself forward, the manifestation of a partisan and factious spirit, and intriguing for office are here specified (cf. Phil. 2:3; James 3:14, 16).

Backbitings. Or, "defamation," "evil speaking," "open slander" (cf. James 4:11; 1 Peter 2:1).

Whisperings. Or, "secret slander," "gossip." In classical Greek and the LXX the word thus translated denotes the magical murmuring of a snake charmer (Eccl. 10:11).

Swellings. Or, "pride," "conceit," "loftiness." This was one of the most prominent sins of certain Corinthians (1 Cor. 4:6, 18, 19; 5:2; cf. chs. 8:1; 13:4).

Tumults. Or, "instability," "disorder," "confusion" (1 Cor. 14:33; 2 Cor. 6:5; James 3:16).

21. When I come again. Paul fears a repetition of the embarrassment and humiliation of a previous visit (see on v. 14), even though the decided majority of the members had repented of their ways (see on ch. 2:1).

Humble. Gr. *tapeinoō*, "to make low," "to bring low," "to abase." The same word is translated "cast down" in ch. 7:6 and "abasing" in ch. 11:7. Even the embarrassing experiences of life Paul accepted as coming from God, in the sense that He permitted them to happen. There is no more humiliating experience for the Christian minister than to find his converts practicing sins such as those listed in ch. 12:20. Paul considered his converts his "crown of rejoicing" (1 Thess. 2:19; cf. 2 Cor. 1:14).

Bewail. Or, "mourn," "lament." Paul will mourn for those who are spiritually dead. To see sin triumph in the lives of professed believers always causes the gospel minister intense suffering and pain (cf. Matt. 23:37–39).

Many. This gives some indication of the widespread nature of misconduct in the Corinthian church.

Sinned already. Literally, "sinned before." This refers, not to their manner of life prior to conversion, but since. The Greek implies that the evil practices of v. 21 have been going on unchecked for some considerable time, with no indication of true repentance. They were old offenders. Though members of the Christian church, they persisted in the depraved practices common in the pagan world of Corinth (see p. 656).

Uncleanness. Or, “impurity,” here used in a general sense of licentious, profligate living such as was common at Corinth (Rom. 1:24; Gal. 5:19; Eph. 4:19).

Fornication. Or, “immorality,” a vice lightly regarded among pagans (1 Cor. 5:1; 6:13, 18; 7:2).

Lasciviousness. Or, “unbridled lust,” “excess,” “licentiousness,” shameless and insolent expressions of passion (Rom. 13:13; Gal. 5:19; 2 Peter 2:7, 18).

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1, 2 AA 469

2 SL 95; 5T 224

2–4AA 562; GC 471

4 AA 469

9 AA 467; AH 274, 345; CM 50; CT 167, 194, 360; Ev 98; EW 16, 20, 46, 77; FE 263, 292, 436; GC 489, 641; LS 66, 91, 128, 265; MB 30, 101; MH 72, 85, 250; ML 94, 99; MYP 92, 108; SL 81; 1T 60, 62, 158, 308, 380, 385; 2T 72; 4T 16, 38; 5T 200; 8T 128

9, 10 MH 482; PK 165, 387; 8T 11

10 CSW 91; DA 493; GW 509; ML 65

11 AA 469

12–15AA 350

15 AA 595; 7T 27; 9T 56

16 Ev 125, 141, 227

CHAPTER 13

1 *He threatened severity, and the power of his apostleship against obstinate sinners. 5 And advising them to a trial of their faith, 7 and to a reformation of their sins before his coming, 11 he concludeth his epistle with a general exhortation and a prayer.*

1. The third time. See on chs. 2:1; 12:14.

Two or three witnesses. This chapter constitutes Paul’s last-known written message to the Corinthians. A serious state of spiritual declension still prevailed in one section of the church (ch. 12:20, 21), one for which previous letters (see on ch. 2:3), a possible second visit (see on ch. 12:14), and the labors of Titus (chs. 2:13; 7:6, 13, 14; 12:18) appear to have accomplished little or nothing. Paul now warns the members regarding this wayward group (ch. 13:1–4). Only one alternative remains—to deal with them firmly and unsparingly in the power and authority of Christ. In anticipation of his intended procedure in disciplining them, Paul cites a recognized Jewish law (Num. 35:30; Deut. 17:6; 19:15), and one to which Christ appealed (Matt. 18:16).

On a previous visit, evidently, Paul had treated this rebel group with leniency and had avoided taking decisive measures against them. They had interpreted this as weakness, even as cowardice, on Paul’s part. Paul referred to that visit as a humiliating experience (chs. 2:1, 4; 12:21). This insubordinate minority was constantly taunting him for proof of his apostolic authority. See on chs. 2:1; 12:14.

2. I told you before. That is, in his previous letters (see on 2 Cor. 2:3; cf. 1 Cor. 4:13–19). On the former visit he did the same by word of mouth (see on 2 Cor. 12:14). They have had ample warning repeated over a considerably extended period of time.

Foretell. Paul now warns them again, in advance of his impending visit.

Heretofore have sinned. From the same Greek word translated “have sinned already” in ch. 12:21.

To all other. Paul addresses this warning to the church as a whole, lest any not directly involved should be sympathetic toward the culprits. Punishment would doubtless include expulsion (cf. 1 Cor. 5:5; 1 Tim. 1:20). The death of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1–11) and the blinding of Elymas (ch. 13:8–11) were instances of the exercise of apostolic authority accompanied by special divine acts of punishment. Perhaps Paul may have anticipated the possibility of a similar miraculous demonstration at Corinth.

I will not spare. They have had their chance to repent. If still recalcitrant, they will be subjected to the most stern church discipline.

3. Ye seek a proof. Paul's foes had dared the apostle to carry out what they chose to consider threats. When members of this worldly-minded group looked at Paul they saw nothing more than what they took to be a weak, contemptible human being (see on ch. 10:10, 12). They refused to accept him as an ambassador for Christ (ch. 5:20). Paul readily admitted that from the human point of view he was "weak" (ch. 11:21, 29). Nevertheless, he insisted that his strength was "in demonstration of the Spirit and of power" (1 Cor. 2:3–5; 2 Cor. 12:10).

In me. Paul had been mighty in truth, in doctrine, in delivering men from sin, in bringing them spiritual regeneration, in performing miracles (ch. 12:12), to the extent that among the Corinthians themselves there were living epistles for Christ (ch. 3:3). Evidence of his apostleship was apparent to all who would examine it candidly (see on ch. 12:11, 12). They had abundant evidence that Christ had spoken through Paul. However, worldly-minded people are not impressed by such evidence (1 Cor. 2:14–16). In reality, Paul's enemies are challenging, not him, but Christ.

4. Crucified through weakness. Paul finds solace in the thought that no one could ever appear more weak and helpless than Christ as He hung in agony and shame upon the cross. Yet Christ lives and is highly exalted (Phil. 2:6–9). All who abide in Christ may expect to share, not only in His humiliation, but also in His strength, which is "made perfect" in human weakness (2 Cor. 12:9; cf. Rom. 6:3–6).

Liveth. The Corinthian rebels have Christ, living "by the power of God," to deal with, not merely a "weak" Paul, as they think.

We ... are weak. Paul candidly admits his weakness, but he glories in the power of Christ that operates in and through him (see chs. 11:30; 12:9, 10) in spite of his weakness.

The power of God. The Corinthians had both witnessed and experienced that power, and could not deny the reality of it.

5. Examine. Beginning with v. 5, Paul directs the focus of attention away from himself and challenges the Corinthians to turn a critical eye upon themselves. Are *they* genuine Christians? Every follower of Christ can profitably examine his own life each day. If we would be more critical of ourselves, we would be less critical of others.

Yourselves. In Greek this word stands in the emphatic position, as if Paul said, "It is yourselves you are to examine." The second clause would similarly read, "It is your own selves you are to prove." Many of the Corinthians were more ready to sit in judgment upon others than upon themselves (see 1 Cor. 11:31, 32; cf. Gal. 6:4). Before they are competent to judge others, men must put themselves to the test. The test we apply to others we should be willing to have applied to ourselves (see on Matt. 7:1–5). The beam must be removed from our own eyes. Men are generally disposed to take too favorable a view of themselves, of their own character, and of their own importance. They usually

shrink from self-examination lest they discover that they are not all they may wish they were. Few men can endure seeing themselves as they really are. The sight is often too disturbing to their ego. Without the remedy of divine love and forgiveness such personal revelations may drive men to distraction, and even suicide. Rather than face themselves as they really are, they focus on the faults of others. Doing so, they lose sight of their own faults and they succeed in convincing themselves that they are far better than other men. Compare on 2 Cor. 10:12. For comment on steps that may appropriately follow self-examination see on ch. 7:9–11.

The faith. Not in a doctrinal, but in a practical, sense. Paul refers to a deep conviction with respect to one's personal relationship to God, to trust and holy fervor born of faith in Christ as Lord and Saviour. Many nominal Christians think it sufficient to test themselves on points of secondary importance such as church membership, church attendance, tithes and offerings, and Sabbath observance. To be sure, these are not to be neglected. But there are even weightier matters that demand consideration (see on Micah 6:8; Matt. 19:16–22; 23:23). Things that are of major consequence include personal experience with the saving, transforming grace of Christ, absolute loyalty to all the revealed will of God, sincerity of motives, and a selfless interest in, and service for, one's fellow men.

Prove. Gr. *dokimazō*, “to test,” “to scrutinize closely.” This is a much stronger word than “examine.” *Dokimazō* is used of assaying gold and silver (cf. Job 23:10).

Christ is in you. That is, living out the principles of His perfect life in your lives (see on Rom. 8:3, 4; Gal. 2:20).

Reprobates. Gr. *adokimoi*, literally, “test failers.” Failure to pass the test was evidence that Christ was not in them and that they were not genuine Christians.

6. We are not reprobates. Paul sincerely hopes that in the eyes of the Corinthians he will pass the test of apostleship.

7. I pray. There are not many instances, even in the Bible, of such Christlike unselfishness and love toward others as Paul here reveals (cf. Ex. 32:31, 32; Luke 23:34; Acts. 7:59, 60; Rom. 9:3). He has set forth the evidence of his apostleship, and is confident the Corinthians will believe he has met the test (see on 2 Cor. 12:11, 12). In love, knowledge, patience, service, ministry, and the fruits of the Spirit, Paul stands vindicated. The authority and power of Christ have been manifested through him.

We should appear. Paul's motive in appealing to the Corinthians to do no wrong was not that he would thereby be proved a genuine apostle (cf. 1 Cor. 9:2), but that they might themselves pass the test, and prove to be true Christians.

Though we be as reprobates. Even if they failed to see in Paul the evidence of genuine apostleship, he hoped that they would give evidence of being genuine Christians. He was willing to be considered a failure, if that would help them succeed.

8. The truth. That is, the truth as it is in Christ Jesus, the truth of salvation as set forth in the Word of God (John 1:14, 17; 8:32; Gal. 2:5, 14). Eternal truth abides unchanged irrespective of what men may do. The enemies of truth have always failed. If the Corinthians are devoted to the truth, they have nothing to fear, for truth makes men invincible. When men place themselves on the side of truth, God accepts responsibility for their security and eternal triumph.

9. We are glad. In vs. 7–10 Paul encourages the Corinthian church to go on to complete recovery and restoration. That is the goal of his hope for them and the burden of his epistle to them.

When we are weak. He will be happy indeed to appear weak in the use of his disciplinary power, if they will only be strong in the graces of the Spirit (see on v. 6) and reflect the character of Christ.

Perfection. Or, “soundness,” “completeness.” Paul longs to see his converts achieve Christian maturity, with every gift, talent, faculty, tendency, and appetite in its proper place. He desires that the church shall be joined together in love, every member of the body functioning properly under the control of the indwelling Spirit (1 Cor. 12:12–31).

10. Lest. See on chs. 10:2; 13:2.

Given me to edification. The purpose of gospel authority is the building up of the church, the perfecting of the saints (John 3:17; John 20:21–23). However necessary the exercise of such power may be for the sake of discipline, it is inevitably second best. It will be no pleasure to Paul to expel a member of the church, and he will take severe action only as a last resort.

From the very entrance of sin Satan and sinful men have been in rebellion against the supreme authority of God. Paul’s aim is to bring men into captivity to Christ (see 2 Cor. 10:5). This cannot be done by force, but by implanting the mind of Christ.

11. Finally, brethren. Paul’s concluding words include a tender farewell, a final admonition (v. 11), a parting salutation (v. 12), and a benediction. His closing exhortation enjoins four Christian graces that will safeguard the Corinthians against the evils that beset them.

Farewell. Literally, “rejoice,” “be glad,” “fare well” (cf. Phil 3:1; 4:4).

Be perfect. Literally, “be mended,” “be put in order,” “be adjusted.” All that has been out of joint is to be restored. See on Matt. 5:48.

Be of good comfort. Gr. *parakaleō*, “be admonished,” “be exhorted” (see on Matt. 5:4), that is, accept the counsel I have given you. The noun and verb forms of this word occur 28 times in the book. The Corinthians are to encourage and strengthen one another to do good. So doing, they will have no time to devour one another.

Be of one mind. Literally, “be of the same mind.” This phrase is particularly characteristic of Paul (Rom. 12:16; 15:6; Phil 2:2; 3:16; 4:2). Christian unity was the burden of Christ’s last recorded prayer for His disciples (John 17:11, 21–23). The supreme need of the Corinthian church was the “unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:2–7).

Live in peace. Or, “live in harmony.” Peace is one of the great legacies Christ bequeathed to His church (John 14:27; 16:33; cf. ch. 20:21, 26; Acts 10:36). It has always been an essential part of the Christian gospel and a test of Christian experience (Rom. 5:1; 10:15; 14:17, 19; 1 Cor. 14:33; Eph. 2:14). To the extent of his ability the Christian is to “live peaceably with all men” (Rom. 12:18). If outward peace is not possible because of factors over which the Christian has no control, he can still enjoy peace in his own heart. “Blessed are the peacemakers” (see on Matt. 5:9).

God of love. See on 1 John 4:8.

Peace. See on Rom. 15:33.

12. An holy kiss. In ancient times, and in various parts of the world today, this is a cordial form of greeting. Such a kiss was given on the cheek, the forehead, the hands, or

even the feet, but never on the lips, men thus greeting men and women greeting women. The custom originated in OT times (Gen. 29:13). It expressed affection (Gen. 27:26, 27; 1 Sam. 20:41), reconciliation (Gen. 45:15), farewell (Ruth 1:9, 14; 1 Kings 19:20), and homage (1 Sam. 10:1). According to Justin Martyr it was commonly used in connection with the observance of the Lord's Supper (*First Apology* 65). It came into general use among early Christians as a token of peace, good will, and reconciliation (Rom. 16:16; 1 Cor. 16:20; 1 Thess. 5:26).

13. The saints. Literally, "holy ones" (see on Acts 9:13; Rom. 1:7). Christians are thus commonly designated in the NT because they were called to live holy lives. Paul doubtless has special reference to the Christians of Macedonia, where he was at the time of writing.

14. Grace. See on Rom. 3:24; 2 Cor. 1:2. This verse is unique in that here alone, in the NT, what later came to be known as the apostolic benediction appears in its complete form. From earliest times it became a part of church liturgy. It was also pronounced at the baptism of new believers and at the dismissal of Christian assemblies.

Together with Matt. 28:19 this verse provides the most complete and explicit summary of the doctrine of the Trinity (see Additional Note on John 1). The order of the names of the Godhead as here given, however, differs from that of Matthew. Generally in Paul's epistles the name of the Father precedes that of the Son (Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:3; 2 Cor. 1:2). Here the order is reversed. The OT formula of dismissal, the Aaronic blessing, was also threefold in nature (Num. 6:24–26). The test of all true Christian experience is fellowship and communion with God through the Holy Spirit.

Soon after dispatching this letter Paul made another visit to Corinth and spent three months there (Acts 20:1–3), during which time he wrote epistles to the Romans and the Galatians. That he was able to do so suggests that the Corinthian believers accepted his second epistle and acted in harmony with the counsel given therein. In his letter to the Romans, Paul implies that he received a kindly welcome at Corinth (Rom. 16:23). Furthermore, the collection at Corinth for the poor at Jerusalem proved successful (Rom. 15:26–28). Early Christian records provide no further information concerning the church at Corinth until the close of the century, when Clement of Rome addressed a letter to them.

The postscript following v. 14 appears in no manuscript earlier than the 8th century. It was a late editorial addition, not part of the original inspired record.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

- 5 CSW 96; CT 194; DA 314; Ev 91; EW 27; FE 214, 266; MYP 83, 122; 1T 188, 263; 2T 71, 81, 251, 316, 511, 552; 5T 103, 163, 610; 7T 252, 257, 285; 8T 103, 299
- 8 GC 101
- 11 4T 20; 5T 248

⁵Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (2 Co 12:1). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.